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The Golden Spider;

Or, The Woman in Black

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CHAPTER I.

THE WOMAN IN BLACK.

"GAMMER," said Sam Barlow, the millionaire, to his servant, "I expect a visitor at ten. You will answer the door and let the party in."

"Yes, sir," bowed the old retainer.

"I will be in the library. You will show the person the door. You may then retire for the night."

"At your service, sir."

With this the Golden Spider, as Barlow was called, disappeared beyond a door, and Gammer was alone.

The servant slipped to the end of the long hall and dropped into his old chair.

He had served the Golden Spider for thirty years. They had been together in the old house in Hampton Court all this time, and the outside world had never crossed its threshold. What lay beyond those doors where Sam Barlow planned and made money hand over fist, it did not know. Rumor said that it was a house of mystery, that its furnishings were of the costliest kind, that there were great pictures on the walls, and the richest carpets on the floors. Old Gammer Sludge gave nothing away. He was servant and slave; he [illegible] Barlow, perhaps, for his living; he [illegible] came and went, and even then after [illegible] He was a man of past sixty with a [illegible] face, deep-set greenish eyes and [illegible] which looked dangerous, but [illegible] as a woman's.

The [illegible] had more than one iron in the fire. He was ten times a millionaire, though one would not have thought so from his dress; he had a desk in a downtown office where he manipulated stocks and other things which had piled up his wealth till he was known as the richest man in the city.

And for what was all this soul-killing toil?

He had no child of his own; if his blood ran in any living veins, the bustling world knew it not. If his heart had ever been stirred by love it was a secret which he kept from every one. At the close of each day he was thousands ahead, and even old Gammer did not know how much his master was worth. And it must be said of him that he never sought to know.

Sam Barlow was not so old as his servitor, though he looked much older. Toiling for the gold-fiend had given him wrinkles, which he could not hide. His peery eyes of the steeliest gray could look through an iron wall as it were, and easily through his callers. He had few visitors at the house in Hampton Court. That is why old Gammer stared at the semi-gloom from his chair and wondered. Who was coming to see his master? Man or woman? Old Sam had not given him the slightest hint. Perhaps some more millions were to be made; perhaps some new scheme to build or finance some railroad in this or some foreign land, for Sam's hand could reach the uttermost corners of the earth and put golden ingots into his purse.

It was nine o'clock when Gammer Sludge received his orders.

He leaned back in his chair, blinking at the front door like an owl.

His hands were crossed in his lap and his green eyes peered out of his old head wistfully.

"Coming at ten, eh?" he said to himself. "Old Sam knows."

At precisely ten the bell rang jerkingly.

Gammer left his chair and glided down the hall in his felt slippers.

He opened the door and held it ajar. In slipped a woman, at whom the emerald eyes blinked questioningly.

Old Gammer said nothing, but putting himself before the visitor, led the way to the library door. He noticed one thing and that was that old Sam's visitor was dressed in black, and that her face was hidden by a veil of the same color.

As the caller crossed the threshold Gammer closed the door and loped away.

"I'm to go to bed now," he said. "That's the command. 'Gammer, they don't want you in the library. It's Sam's hour with his visitor, but who expected a woman of all things? I don't like 'em. They're dangerous and tricky. You don't know just how to smooth the fur, and ten to one you'll smooth it the wrong way if you try. They're like cats in that particular, that's what they are, and cats scratch if you don't smooth 'em right. Ha, ha, you're right, Gammer Sludge."

With this observation the old man went down the hall, past the library door, and then mounted the stair.

At the top of the flight he paused, and instead of going to his room in one wing of the house, he squatted on the landing and watched the floor below. This was against orders and perhaps it was the first time he had disobeyed, but he couldn't help it. There was a woman in the house, a real live woman, the first one that had entered in many years and it meant something out of the ordinary.

He heard the sound of voices in the library, but could distinguish nothing.

Once he slipped down the stair and tried to look into the room over the transom, but he had forgotten that the glass was stained, and he was balked.

Then he went back to his post at the head of the steps and waited.

"What does old Sam Barlow want with a woman in the house?" he asked himself. "He might as well have a wildcat there, that's what he might. Mebbe she's a blackmailer," and then he laughed. "They get nothing from Sam that way. He's a combination lock which none o' them can pick, and they're welcome to all they can get from him."

Half an hour passed and there was a slight movement in the library. Old Gammer drew back into the deeper shadows and craned his neck so he could look down the steps.

He seemed to hold his breath.

Minutes seemed ages to the solitary watcher; he grew as rigid as a post.

At last the door opened and the woman in black came out. Old Gammer saw nothing of his master.

He watched the woman as she glided to the door, which she opened, for it was not locked, and as she paused there, she cast a look toward the room she had just left.

"How like a tigress!" commented Gammer. "She half expects old Sam to follow her."

The Golden Spider, however, did not appear. Gammer thought it was not very courteous in him to let his guest depart without a good night at the door, but he kept his thoughts to himself.

With a final look toward the library, the woman let herself out, and the door was closed, but not the incident.

The ghost of a man at the head of the stair remained motionless for some minutes. He was supposed to be abed. Old Barlow thought him huddled between the sheets, dreaming an old man's dreams. He regarded the library door with great, almost overpowering curiosity.

What was his master doing down there alone? What had his guest said to him?

Perhaps she had killed old Sam.

Gammer stood the suspense as long as he could. Once or twice he slipped half-way down the stair and then went back again. All the time he was trying to screw his courage up to the sticking point.

At last he surrendered.

He went clear to the bottom of the stair. He pushed forward till he reached the door of the library and laid his hand on the latch. Not a sound came to his ears.

"Heaven and old Sam forgive me, I must know!" he exclaimed as he pushed the door open.

The light of the incandescent on the table before him blinded his green eyes for a moment, then he uttered a cry and became rooted, as it were, to the floor.

"My God! I feared so!" wailed old Gammer, as he sprang forward and bent over the form which lay on the carpet at the foot of his master's chair.

"I—thought—so!"

Despite his age, old Gammer was as strong as a lion. Scarcely knowing what he did, he lifted old Barlow from the floor and put him in the chair at the table.

As he did so, he saw the old man's eyes open. He had already noticed that his face was white and ghastly.

"What's happened?" asked Gammer Sludge. "I always said it would be an evil day for us when one o' them creatures entered this house. What's happened, master?"

The Golden Spider shuddered and recognized his servant.

"Go to bed!" he commanded. "I told you once before——"

"I will not!" broke in Gammer. "It is the first time in all these years that I've dared to disobey. Your guest——"

The sallow hand of old Sam found Gammer's wrist.

"I didn't look for her, Gammer," he whispered. "I wasn't expecting that person——"

"No?"

"I expected another one—a man. But she came—God help us, Gammer!"

The old servant drew off a little and stared at his master.

"Go to bed now, Gammer."

"She may come back."

"Not tonight," was the reply. "One visit by that creature is enough in a lifetime," and to Gammer's astonishment Barlow slipped forward and fell face downward on the floor at his feet.

The old servant recoiled with a cry and stared at the body, unable to utter a coherent word.

CHAPTER II.

BEGINNING A MYSTERY.

A man was expected, but a woman came. Gammer Sludge's old head had a thousand wild thoughts in it. He hated women, always had and always would.

By and by he lifted the fallen form from the floor and again deposited it in the chair.

The Golden Spider opened his eyes.

"Go to bed, Gammer," said he. "No! Wait a moment. Did you see her?"

"Yes."

"But I had sent you to bed."

"I could not sleep. My head hurt and I was coming down the stair after a draught."

"Did she go out? Maybe she is in the house," and the speaker shuddered.

"No, I saw her close the door after her. She is gone."

"Thank Heaven! You can go now, Gammer."

"But——"

"Never mind."

"You were not looking for her?"

"No, I expected a man. Why he did not come, and why fate sent that woman here, I do not know."

"Maybe the man will yet come."

"He will not. Now, go. I would be alone. I have work to do. I must draw up the Pettibone loan. There's a cool hundred thousand in it. The tenth of a million. Just think of it. Lock the front door, Gammer. I don't want to see any other one tonight."

Before he left the room Gammer Sludge went to a sideboard, from which he took a bottle and a goblet which he placed on the table before his master.

Old Barlow thanked him with his eyes, and the servant glided away.

He locked the front door and hung the key in a secret place, known only to the pair, then mounted the stair and disappeared.

"What does it all mean?" he asked himself in the seclusion of his little room. "Why should one of those creatures come to this house? She's the first one in thirty years. And why did she affect the old man that way? It's past me, but I will know one o' these days. I will keep my eyes open," and with this promise he pressed the pillow, but kept from the land of dreams till far into the night.

At last the old servant roused himself and slipped from the bedchamber.

He was all curiosity, for he looked cautiously on every side and gained the stair.

The house was still. The light in the hall burned, but there was none in the transom over the library door.

"He's gone to bed, maybe," said old Gammer to himself as he went down. "But the woman—in all my life nothing's occurred like this."

Gammer tried the latch of the library portal and it yielded.

"Gone!" said he as he opened the door.

He groped his way to the table and turned on the electric light.

The room was flooded with a bright glare in a moment.

Gammar Sludge stared at the table where the bottle and glass still reposed, and all at once he started visibly.

Old Sam's hat was missing from its nail. He looked again and discovered that his cane was gone, too.

"He never takes those things to bed with him," almost gasped the old man.

Then he darted from the room and ran up the steps. He did not rap at his master's door, but pressed the latch and it opened without noise.

The Golden Spider was not in bed, what was more, the couch had not been pressed since he made it with his own hands.

He stood by the bed, staring at it like one in a trance. What did it all mean? Where was his master?

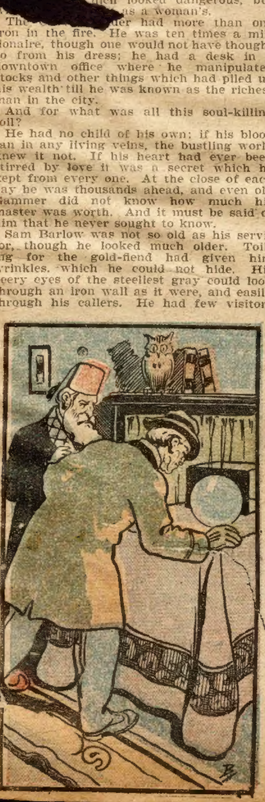
Without a word he bounded from the room and darted below.

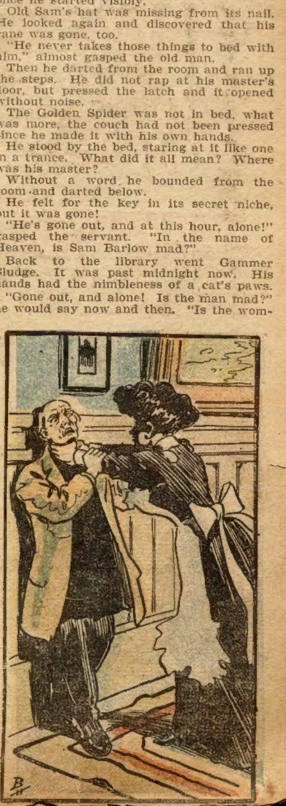
He felt for the key in its secret niche, but it was gone!

"He's gone out, and at this hour, alone!" gasped the servant. "In the name of Heaven, is Sam Barlow mad?"

Back to the library went Gammer Sludge. It was past midnight now. His hands had the nimbleness of a cat's paws.

"Gone out, and alone! Is the man mad?" he would say now and then. "Is the wom-





an to blame for all this? I wish I had her swan-like throat in my hands!" and he shut his members till the bones seemed to crack.

Not fully satisfied he ransacked the whole house. It was a house of many rooms, but he knew them all. Thirty years acquaintance with them was not to be despised.

At last he drifted back to the library, dumfounded.

It was a mystery he could not fathom.

Old Sam gone, out in the city, at that hour? Why had he not told him and sent him out on the errand whatever it was?

At last old Gammer helped himself to the contents of the sideboard and settled back in his master's chair.

"She's to blame for it all," he cried. "It was the coming of that she-tiger that did the whole thing. I wish I knew——"

He paused, for the door had opened and he stared at the person who had come in.

He was confronted by a young man, who fell back a step and looked at him with a strange stare.

"Who are you?" demanded Gammer, starting to his feet, with his greenish eyes fastened upon the intruder. "What brought you here?"

"I was detained, strangely detained," was the reply. "I was to have been here at ten, but——"

"Oh!" interrupted Gammer. "You're the expected visitor? Then, who sent the woman?"

"I don't know. Did some woman come?"

"I call her woman for courtesy's sake. Yes, she came. You did not send her in your place?"

"I sent no one; but your master?"

Old Gammer shook his head.

"I wish I knew," he said. "You don't, of course?"

"If I did I wouldn't be here."

"I see."

"Is Mr. Barlow abed?"

"God wot I wish he was, sir."

"What do you mean?" and the speaker came forward till he stood in front of the old man in the chair. "Tell me where he is."

Gammer sprang from the chair like a rubber ball. He caught the young man by the collar and pulled him forward till their faces nearly met.

"He's gone!" he cried. "He went out after the witch went away. I found the door unlocked and I had locked it myself. It's terrible!"

"Why terrible? You talk in riddles, old man. Isn't your master old enough to take care of himself?"

"Yes, yes, but he never goes out after night. It's the first time in thirty years. He's a day bird; his habits are not nocturnal."

"You don't know where he might be found?"

"I don't know anything."

"I might wait for him," and the young man took the chair Gammer had vacated.

"You might sit there till doomsday and not see him."

"Eh? You say a woman came to see your master?"

"Yes, one of the earth worms we designate by that title. I hate them, hate them!" and the words came from between Mr. Sludge's teeth like the explosion of percussion caps.

"I don't wonder at it," observed the stranger as he looked Gammer over from head to foot, and the result brought a smile to his lips.

"Who are you?" suddenly asked the old servant.

"Since I came hither to see Mr. Barlow, and him alone, I don't deem it necessary to disclose my identity."

"Oh, you don't?" sneered Gammer Sludge.

"I don't."

"Well, you can't see my master. He won't be in any more tonight. He's out yonder somewhere. Never heard of such a trick, and she's to blame for it all."

"You seem to attach a good deal of importance to the visit of this woman——"

"I do."

"Did you see her?"

"I saw her figure, not her face. She was veiled like some mystery or a blackmailer."

"And she saw Mr. Sam Barlow?"

"Yes, in this room."

The young fellow did not speak.

"This is the situation," continued Gammer. "I'm alone in the house, and there's a mystery."

"Mr. Barlow had enemies, you think?"

"Where's the rich man who hasn't? The world is at his heels like a hungry wolf. You're going, eh?"

"Yes, but——"

"What shall I say if he comes back?" broke in Gammer.

"Tell him—but you say he won't come back any more tonight?"

"It's morning now. He may never come back. Between you and me, this is the beginning of a great and dreadful mystery. Samuel Barlow has been a living mystery for thirty years. They call him the Golden Spider, and this house is his web. And to think there's a woman at the bottom of it all. And the first in thirty years, too!"

CHAPTER III.

A SINGULAR STORY.

If Gammer Sludge had followed the last visitor to the house in Hampton Court he would have landed in a thoroughfare known as Princess street. It was an avenue which extended almost across the city. One end of it was filled with the homes of the wealthy class, while the other termination was made up of small shops and the abodes of the common people.

The young man, after leaving Hampton Court, took a car, which he left at a certain spot and entered Princess street. Proceeding down the street some distance he dodged into a small all-night cafe. He walked between two rows of tables and took a seat at one end of the room where he was not likely to be disturbed.

Calling a waiter, he ordered a light repast and settled back to await its arrival.

While thus engaged, an attache of the place came to the table and placed a letter before him. This letter was addressed to "Cecil Taine, In Care of the Royal Cafe." The young man took it up and broke the seal.

He glanced over the writing and recoiled in his chair.

"Well, this is news!" said he, half-aloud. "So he is back, and the woman——"

He did not get to finish, for a footstep, which was not the waiter's, fell upon his ears and he looked up. A young girl had taken a seat opposite him at the table.

She was well dressed and pretty. Her healthy face was in striking contrast to some of those he was wont to meet on the streets of the city, and the young man bowed pleasantly to her with a look of recognition.

"I've been looking for you," said the girl with a smile.

"It's an uncanny hour for that," observed Cecil, "for it's past midnight, you know."

"Yes, I discovered that you had not come in and I know something of your habits."

Cecil hid the half-read letter in his pocket and looked across the table at his companion.

"I've left my place at Gunner's," continued the girl.

"Left it? I thought you were permanently situated there."

"So did I, but you see, when one of influence interferes, you are apt to get your conge whether you deserve it or not."

"But who interfered?" asked Cecil.

"The Madam—in other words, the rich woman in Soho Place."

"Oh!"

There was a little smile on Cecil's face.

"You look a little gaunt, Sybil," he said. "I have just ordered. Ttake a lunch with me. You can talk while you eat."

At this moment the waiter came up and the girl ordered a very modest lunch.

"So Madam interfered and it cost you your place?" Cecil said. "Tell me."

"I don't know what Madam Poman has against me, but she has something. The other day she came in to try on a cloak and Mr. Joncourt sent me with her into the trialroom. The moment Madam caught sight of me she grew white in the face, and turning upon me, cried. 'You? I didn't ask for your assistance.' Then she called in Mr. Joncourt and objected to my presence. Another girl was sent in and this morning I got my conge."

"What was Mr. Joncourt's explanation?"

"He was very curt, wouldn't give me a chance to defend myself. He only said that they can't afford to have employes who are objectionable to their patrons."

"You insisted on names, didn't you?"

"Certainly," smiled the girl. "But I insisted in vain. I was handed my pay envelope and went out."

"Are you sure it was Madam's doings?"

"There's no doubt of it. Once before the woman came to my counter and, seeing me, turned and walked out of the store."

"It's a mystery!" exclaimed Cecil Taine. "Madam Poman must be laboring under some mistake. I shall see Mr. Joncourt myself——"

"No, no, let it go," broke in the girl. "I detest publicity. I have been tied down in that establishment for three years and this is the first vacation I've had."

"It's an unpleasant one, though. You are dismissed under a cloud. Did you ask for a recommend?"

"Yes, but it was refused me. Mr. Joncourt was in bad humor."

"It's simply outrageous!" exclaimed the young man. "What are you going to do?"

"Take a needed rest," laughed the girl. "But it was not to tell you this, my tale of woe, that I've been lying in wait for you."

"No?"

"I've had a little adventure."

"Since leaving Gunner's?"

"Yes. Tonight, as I came down Regent's street on my way here, I nearly collided with the old millionaire, Sam Barlow."

Cecil was alert in a moment.

"Are you sure it was Barlow?" he asked.

"Yes. I know him. While I was looking for employment, just before taking up with Gunner's, I went to his office to see if he didn't want a stenographer. It wasn't the first time I had seen the Golden Spider, as he is called, but I didn't know he was such a strange being. The moment he saw me he fell back in his chair and his jaw dropped. He stared at me for a full minute without uttering a word and when he spoke he was as white as a sheet. I was so frightened that I forgot all about my errand and made a very unceremonious exit. That's why, tonight, I recognized Sam Barlow, on the street. No," continued the girl with positiveness. "It was the Golden Spider, but what was he doing in Regent's street near midnight?"

Cecil Taine shook his head. He recalled his visit to the house in Hampton Court and his interview with Gammer Sludge.

"Which way was he going?" he asked.

"Toward Daly's, that is in Regent's, you know."

"Well," said Cecil, "we'll not discuss old Sam just now. Some other time, perhaps."

"But I can't get over my encounter with him tonight," persisted the young girl. "Why did I nearly frighten him out of his wits three years ago? I'm only Sybil Gray, and he could buy and sell me a million times."

"Perhaps your face resembled some one else's," remarked Cecil. "You know, Sybil, that every one has his double——"

"I know, but who looks like me?" and the girl's face was illuminated by a laugh.

"He's a queer one, anyhow," said Cecil, off-handed. "You are thinking of old Sam Barlow and I can't get over your dismissal from Gunner's."

"Fudge!" cried Miss Gray. "Let that get out of your mind. I'll take care of myself——"

"I know you're capable of doing that, but there's Madam's interference."

Half an hour later Cecil Taine escorted Sybil from the cafe and helped her into a cab, saying "good night" with a smile, which the beautiful girl returned.

"If it wasn't so late Madam Poman would have a caller," said Cecil with a glance at his watch. "What business has that rich woman to have a young girl dismissed from an occupation which has kept the wolf from the door? There's more than mere dislike in this high-handed outrage. I'll bring the female Midas to book for this. And, stranger still, what was old Sam doing in Regent's street at midnight?"

The young man turned away as the cab rattled out of sight, and sought his own lodgings in a street just off of Princess.

In the seclusion of his room he took a chair and, filling his pipe, drew the letter from his pocket. In a moment he was reading as follows:

"Dear Mr. Taine—This is to let you know that your friend Hall Black is in the city, and that Margaret Mattox is also here. I have thought it best to warn you, for 'forewarned is forearmed,' you know. Not knowing where you are lodging now, for it's hard to keep track of you, old boy, but thinking that you may still patronize the Royal, I send this through the proprietor. I don't know where Margaret Mattox is staying, but I saw her in Soho place yesterday. I'll be in Camden Circle for the next ten days; then I'm going to take a flight. Your friend MAX."

Cecil laid the letter down and took a few whiffs in utter silence.

"Back, are they?" said he. "I don't care so much for the man as I do for the woman. When a ticket-of-leave woman is let loose, it's ten chances to one that she's not reformed. Let me see. I've got her number somewhere."

He ransacked a desk for a little while and brought to light a notebook.

"You've been Number 9988, Miss Mattox, and for four years at that," he exclaimed. "Of course, you've not forgotten me, but we'll keep a lookout for you. Seen in Soho Place, eh, right in Midas' domain! One would think that you'd keep aloof from that locality after what happened four years ago, but——"

He sprang to his feet as he heard a rustle at his window where some shrubbery grew.

As he crossed the room, there came a loud report and the shattering of glass, and Cecil Taine fell back and dropped heavily against the opposite wall. A cold, revengeful laugh followed the shot, and a human figure vanished down the street.

CHAPTER IV.

MILLIONS OR EXPOSURE.

Three whole days passed.

Gammer Sludge had heard nothing of the Golden Spider.

Old Sam Barlow was still missing. It was the most singular thing in the world.

The more the old servant thought about it the deeper the mystery grew.

He wondered why the young man, who had called, had not come back, and also what had become of the woman in Black.

Several times he had been asked by neighbors in Hampton Court if old Barlow was ill, but Gammer shook his head and said nothing. He went down into Pearl street, where the old man had his office, and looked in at the window, but the familiar figure was not at the desk. Then he would walk away, with the puzzle deeper than before. Once, and only once, he thought of the authorities, but he hated the police. Not for the world would he have gone to Scotland Yard with his story.

At last he began to lie about the whole thing. In response to inquiries he said that his master was out of the city on business and the lie worked so well that he grew quite glib telling it. He couldn't say when old Sam would return, but he was sure he would come back soon and resume his desk in Pearl street. But all the time old Gammer believed that his master would never come back.

He searched the house over and over fifty times. He went where he had never gone before, dipped his hands into places which he had not dared to touch, looked at private papers which had been kept from his prying eyes—all in hopes of finding some clew to Sam Barlow's disappearance.

He took his meals in silence and slept but little. In order to strengthen his nerves he drank some of the best wine in the cellar, but all the time he tried to solve the mystery by deep thinking. He began to haunt the downtown streets and almost all night he crouched in his chair at the head of the stair, watching the door in hopes that old Barlow would come back.

In those three days Gammer lost flesh till he began to look like a skeleton.

His slippers grew too large for his feet, his clothes got loose on his lank figure, and his green eyes seemed to lose themselves in the depths of his head.

And yet Sam did not come back.

Of course, the financial world missed him. He was a power in it, for he handled millions and his word made and unmade men. His doings were reported in the newspapers when big deals were discussed, and the Golden Spider's wealth moved the money markets.

What had become of him?

Old Gammer could associate his vanishment with nothing else but the coming of the woman in black. He would have given his right arm to have seen her face. He had a splendid memory and he felt that if he had obtained but a glimpse of her features he would know them anywhere. He did not know where to look for her. She had vanished like his master, and beyond the house in Hampton Court lay that impenetrable mystery which Gammer Sludge was powerless to solve.

But little mail was brought to the house. It was left at the downtown office.

On the third day of mystery, however, a letter was delivered at Hampton Court. This was an occurrence so unusual that old Gammer started as the postman handed him the missive.

It was the last delivery for the day, and the fog was falling over the city.

Mr. Sludge took the letter between his long, sallow fingers and glided with it to the library.

He turned on the incandescent and flooded the room with light. Then he sat down in old Sam's chair and held up the letter for inspection.

It was encased in a delicate envelope, just the sort that creature woman, whom he hated so, would be apt to use. He held it between his green eyes and the brilliant light. There was writing inside, but he was not able to make out the words.

Who would be writing to Sam Barlow in an envelope like that?

It was not a business letter, it did not discuss millions, railway stocks and diamond mines; it was a letter totally different from such missives. It was from a woman, and she dared not send it to the office in Pearl street.

Old Gammer felt his honesty oozing out at his finger ends while he held the letter between him and the light. His curiosity was fast getting the better of him. He laid it down and shut his teeth hard, then, dismissing temptation, he placed the letter in a drawer and felt relieved. But not for long.

He opened the drawer and took the letter out. The demon was tugging at his heartstrings, to say nothing of his conscience. He at last took a pin from his coat and began to pick open the end of the envelope. He started at every sound that came in from the street. It was his first offense, but he said, inwardly, that solicitude for his master was plenty of excuse.

It took him some time to open the envelope. At last his task was accomplished and he timidly drew forth the letter. Even then he laid it down and shook his head.

"Don't be a coward, Gammer Sludge," a voice seemed to whisper at his ear. "Where's all your boasted bravery? You're a child and not a man."

He shut his eyes a moment and picked up the letter again. His fingers trembled a trifle as he unfolded it. He was not a rapid reader, in fact, thirty years in that house had dimmed his sight to some extent, but for all this he had bright, uneasy eyes.

Old Gammer bent forward in his eagerness to master the contents of the letter.

To his astonishment it was the briefest letter he had ever seen.

It contained but four words:

"Two millions or exposure!"

There was no signature. Old Gammer turned the paper over and over, looking for one, but he found it not. At last it got through his cranium that such a letter needed no signature.

"She sent it, I know she did!" he exclaimed. "This is from that she-cat in black. Hang the woman, I mean the tigress, if I had her here at this minute——"

He did not finish the sentence, for he had resort to the bottle which he had brought from the sideboard.

Only four words, but they meant a great deal. It was a simple blackmailing scheme. It was a threat to get two millions from old Sam, nothing more or less.

What had his master done that he should give up that amount of money to avoid exposure? Exposure of what? What crime had he committed? Of course, all his financial dealings would not hold the red ribbon for honesty, but what of that?

Old Gammer read the four words over and over.

"It's her work!" he repeated. "I'd kill that tigress if I had her here!"

At last he replaced the letter in its covering, and by the aid of colorless mucilage, resealed it. His work was so well done that no one could have detected it.

He remained in the library till ten o'clock. Before he went to his room he saw that the front door was not bolted on the inside. Barlow might come back in the night and, as he had taken the key with him, Gammer did not want to interfere with his return.

"I'll go out tomorrow," said the old servant to himself when he reached his little chamber. "I'm going to ransack the town for old Sam. This is more than I can stand. I'm going mad, I am. Two millions, eh? Two millions or exposure! It's beastly! But why did he go away? That's the mystery."

In the middle of the night he found himself sitting up in bed.

There was a night-lamp in his room and he saw the reflection of his face in the mirror.

"I heard a noise," said Gammer. "It wasn't a dream. No, there's some one in the house."

He slipped from bed and got into his slippers.

Drawing his dressing gown around him, he glided toward the door and thence to the landing. The light of the lamp in the hall revealed the lower landing. Gammer halted at the head of the stair and looked down.

All at once he heard a sound like the fall of a heavy body.

It seemed to come from the library.

Down the stair he went, his hand gripping the banisters to steady his nerves, but at the library door he halted.

The stillness of death now pervaded the room beyond the portal.

"I'm going in if the whole race of Philistines are there," he said suddenly. "If i[illegible] master come back——"

WANTS H[illegible] LETTER PUBLISHED

For Benefit of Women who Suffer from Female Ills

Minneapolis, Minn.—"I was a great sufferer from female troubles which caused a weakness and broken down condition of the system. I read so much of what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound had done for other suffering women I felt sure it would help me, and I must say it did help me wonderfully. My pains all left me, I grew stronger, and within three months I was a perfectly well woman.

"I want this letter made public to show the benefit women may derive from Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound."—Mrs. JOHN G. MOLDAN, 2115 Second St., North, Minneapolis, Minn.

Thousands of unsolicited and genuine testimonials like the above prove the efficiency of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, which is made exclusively from roots and herbs.

Women who suffer from those distressing ills peculiar to their sex should not lose sight of these facts or doubt the ability of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to restore their health.

If you want special advice write to Mrs. Pinkham, at Lynn, Mass. She will treat your letter as strictly confidential. For 20 years she has been helping sick women in this way, free of charge. Don't hesitate—write at once.

He had opened the door and halted. Another and quite different cry came to his lips. There was a human figure lying prone on the floor at the foot of old Sam's chair, but it was not the Golden Spider.

In a moment Gammer was in the middle of the room.

He stared at the body lying at his feet; his face was the hue of Alpine snow.

He was looking down upon the woman he hated—the woman in black!

CHAPTER V.

CECIL TAINE MAKES A CALL.

It was the third day after the vanishment of the Golden Spider.

Gammer Sludge was at his morning meal, a most frugal one, for he was no epicure.

He was attired in a frayed dressing gown. His feet, minus stockings, were encased in gray felt slippers, and his face, unshaven, did not add to his looks.

He had thought a good deal about the woman in black, whom he had found on the floor of the library. It was a strange experience for Mr. Sludge. Why she had come back to the house in Hampton Court, he did not know.

She had not stopped to explain, for when he lifted her up, she gave him a look he would never forget, and with a little cry bounded into the hall and out into the street.

He did not get to see her face. Her veil had been fastened about her throat, interfering with his curiosity, and he had been compelled to let the she-cat, as he called her, vanish without an explanation.

On this particular morning he was about to pour his coffee when the tinkling of the door-bell sent a thrill through every nerve. Had Sam Barlow come back?

Old Gammer bounded from his chair and ran into the hallway. In a moment he was at the door and when he opened it he recoiled with a cry and a blank stare.

The young man who had come to keep an engagement with his master the night of the disappearance stood before him—Cecil Taine.

Cecil entered as Gammer held the door open, and was conducted to the library.

"You see, I'm back again?" he said, looking at the old man from the Golden Spider's chair.

"Yes."

"Any news of him?"

The old servitor shook his head.

"You've had no visitors since?"

"Yes, the tigress."

"What, the woman who was closeted with him the night of the mystery?"

"The same creature. I found her lying face downward on the carpet yonder."

"Well, what was she like?"

"Just as if I could see through a close veil," smiled Gammer. "She must have fainted from some cause. When I picked her up, hardly keeping my hands from throttling her, Heaven forgive me, she bolted off and that's the last I've seen of her."

"It's strange," commented Cecil. "We'll get at this mystery one of these days, I hope."

"I wish I was there now. It's wearing me out. I won't be able to cast a shadow after awhile," and he looked it.

"You've had no message from Mr. Barlow?"

"Not a line."

"See here, Mr. Sludge. Why can't we become partners in this hunt?"

"Eh?"

"I've not been idle since I was here last. I'll be fair with you if you will return the compliment."

Gammer studied a moment. He needed assistance in his dilemma, that much was certain, and he liked the appearance of the clean-cut young man before him.

"I'll be fair," said he. "Now go ahead."

"Do you recall, Mr. Sludge," said Cecil, with a nod of approval, "that Mr. Barlow was the victim of a forgery four years ago?"

"Distinctly, sir."

"Well, I happened to have a part in the trial of the culprits. I was the hand-writing expert on the case. It was mainly on my testimony that the pair was convicted."

"And they're doing time now, the man and the woman!" exclaimed old Gammer.

"No, they're back on tickets-of-leave."

It seemed to Cecil that the old man would start from his chair.

"You don't tell me?" he ejaculated as a paleness overspread his face. "Back, are they? Here, in the city?"

"Yes, and what is more, they want revenge. Within the last few hours my life has been attempted by a shot through my window," and Cecil brushed back a lock of hair and displayed a streak of crimson across one temple.

"Jupiter! they nearly got you!" was the exclamation.

Cecil smiled, but did not reply for a moment.

"I know them both," he remarked. "Let us leave them for a moment. Do you know, Mr. Sludge, what would take your master into Regent's street at midnight?"

"Into Regent's street? When was he there?"

"The night he left this house for the last time."

"I don't know, I'm sure. He's a strange man, my master is. He has some secrets which I don't share. Who saw him in Regent's street?"

"A person who is perfectly reliable. One can get to Soho place via Regent's, you know."

"Yes."

"He was headed in that direction when seen. Now, another question," and Cecil watched the old man narrowly as he bent forward and laid one hand on his knee. "Has Mr. Barlow any children?"

At this a change came over the old servant's face. His greenish eyes seemed ready to leap from their cavernous sockets.

"Mr. Barlow was never married," he said, controlling himself with a mighty effort.

"Not to your knowledge, Mr. Sludge?"

"Why, I've been with him these thirty years."

"And he was never away long enough to take a wife in all this time?"

"Oh," said Gammer, "he's been away at intervals. But he always hated women. Married? Sam Barlow?" and for the first time the semblance of a smile appeared on Mr. Sludge's face. "No, he was never married."

"There's a woman's hand in all this," said Cecil with confidence. "Maybe more than one."

"Yes, and in this," replied the old man with startling emphasis, and his finger touched a little envelope which rested under a glass paper-weight on the table.

He picked up the four-worded letter and pushed it forward.

"When did this arrive?" asked Cecil.

"Since he went away," said Gammer with caution. "I—well, I'll tell the truth, Mr. Taine. I opened that letter against by orders, but it was because of my solicitude for Mr. Barlow, you understand."

"Perfectly natural," answered Cecil, as his eyes dropped to the superscription. "I think I've seen this handwriting before."

"I'm not familiar with writing, for I never got many letters, certainly none like that one."

"What is the purport of this communication?"

"It contains but four words: 'Two millions or exposure.'"

"So? A threat, I see. Would you mind letting me see the letter? It might help me."

"Open it."

Cecil did so in a manner which showed a detective's caution, and mastered the one line at a glance.

"It's the same—the same scrawl which convicted the parties four years ago!" he exclaimed.

"Ah!"

"The very same. This is further proof that the two are back again. Now, Mr. Sludge, let us go a step further. I think we are making some headway. Whenever there is a murder committed in France the prefect of police says: 'Find the woman.'"

"That's right. She's been the bane of man ever since Eve ate the apple. I don't like 'em!" and the yellow teeth of Gammer Sludge closed harshly behind the last word. "When we find the woman we'll know why Sam Barlow left home, eh?"

Cecil nodded and replaced the letter on the table.

"This letter escaped the eye of the woman in Black, did it not?"

"Yes; at least it was undisturbed."

Cecil Taine rose and threw a rapid glance around the room.

"One thing is certain," said he, coming back to the old servant. "Sam Barlow was alive at twelve o'clock the night of his disappearance. This we know. He was in Regent's street at that hour. Do you know who lives in Soho place?"

"I don't run in that class," said the old man with another smile. "There's where the bigbugs live."

"It's Millionaires' Hundred, you know."

"Yes."

"Not being a sharer of your master's financial secrets, you are not acquainted with his clients?"

"I don't know any of them."

"You have never heard of Mrs. Leone Poman?"

"Only once, sir."

Cecil's countenance brightened at these words.

"Tell me about the one time, Mr. Sludge," he said.

"I can't, sir. It's the only secret I've got, and it's in a way connected with Sam Barlow."

"Very well. Then I'll bid you good morning."

Old Gammer followed the young man to the door. As Cecil went down the steps, old Sludge shook his fist after him.

"Tell him that?" he almost yelled. "Not if I never again hear of Sam Barlow of Hampton Court!"

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE STAIR.

At precisely the same hour when Cecil Taine was interviewing old Sludge in the library in Hampton Court, in another part of the bustling city a woman occupied an arm-chair in a parlor which gave every evidence of wealth.

A creature of ample proportions, with a florid face, which was well powdered after the manner of the rich, with fingers that blazed with rings and a bracelet set in diamonds, she looked like some female Midas, who had nothing to do but present a striking appearance in a house of wealth.

She was past fifty, but beautiful still, a woman who would shine in the circles of wealth, and one who might lead society along the primrose way.

She was quite alone on this occasion. Massive curtains hung from the tops of the windows, and heavy oil paintings adorned the walls.

This person was Mrs. Leone Poman, reputed to be worth millions, a woman who had been presented to the Queen and who was known to be charitable in a singular way. Her charities extended only to the helping of lame dogs, which were picked up in the streets by her agents. She had endowed a hospital for canines over which several people held sway, but she had never crossed the threshold of her hospital, much less would she allow a dog in her home.

Madam Poman had before her on a mahogany table a very delicate goblet from which she now and then sipped a sort of yellowish liquid which she seemed to enjoy.

An hour of this enjoyment passed and the door-bell rang musically.

The woman heard the sound as well as the tripping feet of the maid who answered the ring.

Presently a door opened and the head of a well-gowned girl came into view.

"A gentleman," announced the maid.

Mrs. Poman turned her head and said, listlessly:

"His card, Mariamme?"

The girl came forward and laid a little bit of glazed pasteboard before her mistress.

Mrs. Poman took it up, and adjusting her monocle, read the name of Cecil Taine.

"What is he like, Mariamme?" she asked with another glance at the girl.

"He's a smart looking young man and——"

"Admit him," and the mistress of the house leaned back in her chair and placed her hands in a position that would display the rings to advantage.

In another moment Cecil Taine stood before her.

He was inspected from head to foot by a pair of searching gray eyes before he was addressed by so much as a word.

"I see," and the woman's gaze dropped to the card. "I see that I am indebted for this visit to a Mr. Cecil Taine. Why have you called?"

Cecil was not to be put out by the coolness of this woman.

"I have called in behalf of a friend of mine," said Cecil. "A young woman has lost her place in one of the large stores——"

"What have I to do with an affair of this kind? I have no doubt young women lose their jobs every day and doubtless for cause, too."

"But this young lady, who had a fair position at Gunner's, has been dismissed without an explanation; she has been practically retired under a cloud——"

"One moment," and Mrs. Poman's hands separated and one of them was lifted to stay Cecil's words. "I have nothing to do with the affairs of the business houses."

"But, Madam, are you sure you have nothing to do with this girl losing her place?"

"Why should I?"

"How comes it then, Madam, that you took umbrage when the girl accompanied you into the cloakroom at Gunner's and demanded that some one else should attend you?"

"I really don't recall such an incident."

"But Miss Gray is thoroughly reliable. She cannot think in what way she may have offended you."

"Miss Gray, eh?" exclaimed the woman. "I remember now."

"The incident, then, has been recalled?" said Cecil with some show of victory. "You remember treating her thus in the cloakroom?"

"Yes."

"Usually I have nothing to do with such incidents. But it happens that the young woman is a friend of mine, and I am here to ask if you will not explain your action."

"I have nothing to explain, sir," coldly said Mrs. Poman. "There are reasons which I must decline to give."

"You are determined, then, to let the young woman remain under a cloud?"

Mrs. Poman sipped the yellowish wine and seemed to be collecting her thoughts.

"I might ask why you take such a deep interest in this young woman," she said.

"And I might decline to explain," replied Cecil with rising acerbity.

The lady in silk leaned back in her chair and half-closed her eyes.

So far as she was concerned the interview was at an end.

Cecil, however, was not to be put off thus.

"You will not explain?" he said.

CLEAR-HEADED

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The chief bookkeeper in a large business house in one of our great Western cities speaks of the harm coffee did for him:

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"About three and a half years ago I had an attack of pneumonia, which left a memento in the shape of dyspepsia, or rather, to speak more correctly, neuralgia of the stomach. My 'cup of cheer' had always been coffee or tea, but I became convinced, after a time, that they aggravated my stomach trouble. I happened to mention the matter to my grocer one day and he suggested that I give Postum a trial.

"Next day it came, but the cook made the mistake of not boiling it sufficiently, and we did not like it much. This was, however, soon remedied, and now we like it so much that we will never change back. Postum, being a food beverage instead of a drug, has been the means of curing my stomach trouble, I verily believe, for I am a well man today and have used no other remedy.

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Danger of Agreeing.

Clara—That handsome stranger appears to have taken quite a shine to you, Maud.

Maud—Y-e-s; can't imagine why.

Clara—Nor I.

Maud—I'll never speak to you again, so there.

J. P.

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Tender-Hearted Maid.

"No," said the heiress, "I am sorry, but I can never be your wife."

"Why not?" queried the poor but otherwise honest young man.

"Because," she explained, "I couldn't bear to have your feelings hurt by hearing people say you married me for my money."

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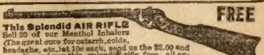

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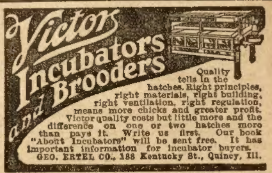

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"I will not. Mariamme?"

The maid, who was not far away, came instantly.

"You will show the gentleman out," said Mrs. Poman.

Cecil bit his lips half-through. This was the coolest woman he had ever dealt with.

When he thought of Sybil Gray, dismissed without an explanation, his gorge rose and his face flushed.

The maid stood waiting at the door with her eyes fixed upon him.

"Show the gentleman out, Mariamme!" commanded the woman.

"One moment——"

"Obey me, girl. And you, sir, will take your departure."

"Not without a word more," said Cecil. "This girl shall not remain under a cloud. I shall constitute myself her champion and go to the bottom of this affair."

"I have nothing to do with your intentions," coldly said the woman. "You will please leave me alone."

Thus dismissed Cecil crossed the room and reached the open door.

"Madam," said he, with a look that spoke of determination, "you will permit me to say ere I go that other matters aside from the dismissal of this young woman enter into this affair. There are glass houses in London——"

A wave of the jeweled hand interrupted him and he held his breath as he watched Mrs. Poman.

"Are you going to insinuate?" she exclaimed. "Dare you insult me in my own house?"

"No insult is intended, Madam, I am only speaking the truth."

"Say on, then."

"It is not necessary," replied Cecil, withdrawing a little further. "I shall not prolong this interview since you are not disposed to give Miss Gray justice."

"Just as you please, sir. It seems to me that there is more in your visit than a mere desire to favor the dismissed clerk."

With this Mrs. Poman reached out for the wine glass and moistened her lips with another sip.

Cecil bowed coldly and stalked into the hall.

"A serpent in diamonds!" he commented as he took a farewell look at the woman in the plush chair. "I'll break her frigidity and make her become a supplicant for mercy before I'm through with her."

As he reached the door he glanced up at the broad stair which ascended from the hall and saw a figure on the landing above. It was the figure of a woman and she was leaning forward in a listening attitude, a pair of peery black eyes glittering in her head.

At sight of Cecil she drew back, but he had seen enough to send a thrill through every nerve.

"Ah!" he ejaculated. "Max was not mistaken. Margaret Mattox, the ticket-of-leave woman, is surely back."

Already the face at the head of the stair had vanished, but he had seen enough.

What took place after the heavy door of the house in Soho place had closed behind him, he did not see.

A form flitted down the steps and burst into the room occupied by Mrs. Poman.

The woman halted before the female Midas and looked down into her almost colorless face.

"I could have killed him if I had but known," she cried.

"Why didn't you?" was the reply.

"I had left the weapon in my room. I did not know it was him. I shall be more careful hereafter."

"Margaret," said Mrs. Poman, "everything depends on the extinction of that man."

"Your safety and mine."

"Yes, yes. He will get at the bottom of the other great secret. His interest in the girl dismissed from Gunner's was a blind. If he discovers our secret, this city, as big as it is, will be too small to hold us."

Margaret Mattox did not speak, but into her eyes came a glare which boded Cecil Taine no good.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CRYSTAL BALL.

There was unwonted activity in the house in Hampton Court.

Gammer Sludge was undergoing a metamorphosis which had not taken place for years. The old man had discarded the felt slippers, and his feet were encased in a pair of street shoes. He had applied a razor to his peaked face and the last vestige of its hirsute adornment had disappeared. The frayed dressing gown had given place to a more respectable suit and nothing but the greenish eyes were left to establish the old man's identity.

The clocks in the neighborhood had proclaimed the hour of nine, and the street lights had been lighted.

Mr. Sludge had gone through this change with varying emotions as shown by his face. Try as he would he could not keep down the excitement which fluttered his heart, and when he had completed the final details of his toilet he made ready to leave the house. He slipped out with his hat pulled down over his brow and locked the front door with a master key.

Looking carefully around him, he glided off, his angular form dodging in and out among the shadows, and in a little while he had vanished.

His movements were agile for one of his years, and one would not have thought that he was capable of them.

He did not halt till he had reached a little doorway which led him into an area from which he ascended a flight of steps. At the top of the steps he found another door upon which he knocked, to be admitted by a man who looked at him with an air of surprise and then shuffled across the apartment and waved his visitor to a cane-bottomed chair. Gammer took the chair with a sigh of genuine relief.

The person who had admitted the old man looked for all the world like one who dealt in the black arts. His skull cap glistened on his head and his long hands resembled the talons of some monster bird of prey.

"You don't come often," he said to Mr. Sludge, whom he inspected with a good deal of curiosity.

"I don't have to," replied Gammer. "If it wasn't pressing business I wouldn't be here now."

"You've lost something, Mr. Sludge?"

"Yes, and more than that. What does your crystal say?"

In reply to these words the other one opened a drawer in the table and took out a large, round crystal, which he placed before him.

Old Gammer eyed the object with rising interest.

"I can't stand this any longer," he exclaimed. "If I don't know what's become of him, I'll go mad."

After making a few cabalistic movements over the ball of glass the astrologer beckoned his visitor forward, and Gammer took a seat at the table.

"It never fails, you know—my mystic ball," he said in low tones. "What do you see, Mr. Sludge?"

"Nothing," replied Gammer, glancing up at the old man. "I'm afraid the ball is not in working order tonight."

"Fix your thoughts on the object of your solicitude and look," was the response.

"I'll do that," and the gaze of Gammer Sludge became riveted on the crystal.

"Well!" he suddenly exclaimed, catching hold of the arms of the chair. "It's simply wonderful."

"You see something, eh?"

There was no reply, for the old servant's lips were glued together as if determined that not a word should slip out between them.

"I've seen enough!" he cried gaspingly, falling back. "It's a wonderful thing, this ball."

The astrologer leaned over the crystal and then looked from it into his visitor's pallid face.

"You see it all," said he. "I can't see anything. It all lies between your fixed thoughts and the crystal."

"He's in the city," said Sludge. "He's tied in a chair, a curious looking chair, not at all like this one."

"Oh! you're looking for some missing person?"

"Yes, for my master."

"Not Sam Barlow of Hampton Court?"

"Old Sam, the Golden Spider."

"He's missing, then?"

"And has been these three days."

"And you think you see him in the crystal?"

"To be sure I do. I'll go right to him now. If I take my mind from him now and fix it on something else will the ball speak again?"

"You might try."

Gammer passed his hand across his sallow brow and looked again.

"I see nothing at all but cloudy glass," said he, disappointedly.

"You're confusing your mind with what you've just seen. Try once more."

For several minutes the old servitor looked with penetration, and then uttered a cry.

"The woman in black. Heavens! she is at the door of the room where he is."

"That's better."

"And she's armed! She's got a weapon in her hand. She's going to slay Sam Barlow!"

At this Gammer remained silent and looked into the face of the silent man at his elbow.

"I've heard of this magic ball," he said. "It never fails, eh?"

"Never," was the reply with visible feelings of pride.

"Then I'll go."

Mr. Sludge rose and drew an old-fashioned purse from his pocket.

He counted out some silver till the astrologer told him to desist. His long hands raked in the coin and transferred it to the drawer.

Old Gammer picked up his hat and pulled it down over his brow.

"I'm off now," he said. "I think I can find master Sam."

"But you must be careful if, as you say, he is tied in a chair, with an armed woman at the door. These creatures are dangerous at times."

"I know that. I've seen the outside of the house where he is, and I won't stop short of it."

"Why should a man like Sam Barlow be missing?" asked the astrologer.

"That's the mystery. He went away at night. Never did such a thing before. A woman's at the bottom of the whole rascally thing—the woman in black."

With this Gammer Sludge moved forward and opened the door. In another moment he was going down the steps toward the street.

At the foot of the flight he paused, as if to collect his thoughts.

"I've found him!" he cried. "And in that house. Tied in a chair, too. It's blackmail pure and simple."

He put off down the street, and half an hour later turned up in a better quarter of the roaring city.

"I'll find the house," he said to himself. "It can't elude me! If there was a path strewn with daggers before me I'd go straight to that accursed place."

But Mr. Sludge was to have the adventure of his life. He shuffled over the stones and paused at last before an imposing mansion which betokened wealth. Up the steps he went, and his hand jerked the knocker, a lion's head, and he fell back to wait for the response.

The door opened in his face and he caught sight of the figure of a tall woman, who looked in his green eyes like an Amazonian princess.

"Who is it?" asked a voice.

"It's me."

"That answers nothing," was the reply. "'Me' may mean the crown prince or the tramp of Holborn."

"I'm neither, please your grace," said Gammer, sarcastically. "I am Tony Watch-the-Corner," and the old man laughed within himself.

The big maid held the door open and Gammer slipped inside.

"I'll go right upstairs," said he. "I know where the room is."

"You'll do nothing like that, Master Tony Watch-the-Corner. You will have to see the mistress first. She's out just now."

Old Gammer felt the strength of youth surge through his body. All his long-vanished powers seemed to come back. He looked the big maid over from head to foot and took a step forward.

"Stand aside!" he cried. "I'm going up, I say. I know where he is!"

His hands fell upon the broad shoulders before him and he pushed their owner against the wall. The light of a tiger shone in his emerald eyes.

The big girl struggled, and suddenly, with the dexterity of an acrobat, she wrenched loose from the sallow hands and threw Gammer halfway across the hall. He tried to recover his equilibrium, but she was too swift for him.

"You're not Tony-Watch-the-Corner!" she cried as she came down upon him like an avalanche. "You're a spy! And it's death to play that role in this house."

Old Gammer was clay in the hands of the

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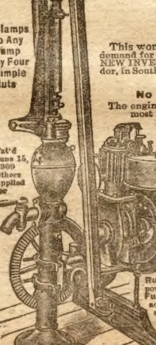

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big maid. He felt a pair of strong hands at his throat, and the next moment he was pressed against the cold wall, and the eyes of the Amazon were glittering like a basilisk's within two inches of his face.

"What a fool I've been," thought Mr. Sludge. "I've run into a lion's den and this is death—death!"

CHAPTER VIII.
SYBIL GRAY'S VISITOR.

Miss Sybil Gray, the dismissed employe of Gunner's, felt that she needed rest. She had been the slave of the big store for years and but for the curt dismissal she would have felt that her freedom was the best thing for her.

She felt humiliated by the treatment she had received, and while she would have sought a "recommend," for she had served the firm to the best of her ability, she hoped that Cecil Taine would not open up the matter and cause her undue notoriety.

Therefore, she remained at home a little while after the meeting with him at the Princess street cafe, and was planning to go to the sea for a few days.

That Madam Poman had had a hand in her misfortune she did not doubt, but she never thought that her adventure was connected in any way with Sam Barlow, the Golden Spider.

On the night of Gammer Sludge's adventure, the end of which we shall see later on, she was quite alone in her modest lodgings in Apple Way. This was a narrow street, shut off from the busy thoroughfares of the city. A great many young girls, who occupied positions in the thousand-and-one establishments that employed girls, lived in Apple Way, and did their own housekeeping. Sybil was one of these.

The young girl was reading and did not hear the footsteps which came up the stair and paused at the door of her room. The first notice she had of a caller was the rap on the panel.

"Come in!" exclaimed Sybil, thinking her visitor was one of the numerous clerks of Apple street.

When the door opened the girl looked up and then laid aside the book.

She was confronted by a woman, dressed in plain black, a woman with not unhandsome face and deep brown eyes.

"Miss Sybil Gray?" asked the visitor, coming forward.

"If you please."

"Late in the employ of Gunner?"

"Yes," with a little sigh.

"I am Miss Howard," continued the young woman. "I am an agent of the Finding Bureau, that is, a bureau which obtains situations for girls out of work."

"I am not an applicant just now," Sybil hastened to say. "I need a little rest and think I shall take a trip to the sea——"

"And leave some of your hard-earned money in the hands of the sharks who infest those places?"

"I can't say as to that. One cannot live at the sea without hotel bills."

"No! If you will register with us we may be able to have a place for you when you return."

The insistence of the young woman nettled Sybil, yet she managed to hide it as she replied:

"I thank you for your interest, but I do not care to register."

The young clerk's caller came a little nearer and leaned forward, with her brown eyes penetrating to the depths of Sybil's soul as it seemed.

"I'll take your name anyhow," she said. "We have just opened a new bureau on St. Paul street, near Piccadilly."

Sybil, who knew the city very well, said, with a little curiosity:

"Isn't that an out-of-the-way place for an employment bureau? I don't mind seeing anything of the kind in that locality."

"We wanted a spot where we could reach the girls of this part of the city."

Sybil was silent.

"If you will give me the names of your former employers——"

"It's not necessary," broke in the fair clerk. "I shall not need the help of your bureau."

"You're independent!" exclaimed Miss Howard. "I don't think you would take with the stores."

Sybil rose and calmly crossed the room. She did not like the forwardness of the woman who stood in the middle of her room.

"There is no necessity of our discussing the matter," she said, turning upon her visitor at the door. "Should I wish the services of your bureau I shall not hesitate to give you a call."

Then the robe of secrecy dropped, falling, as it were, from the shoulders of the woman who called herself Miss Howard.

"Come here, girl," she said in stern tones, which went to the depths of Sybil's nature.

"I am not used to being commanded in my own room."

The woman with the brown eyes stamped a little foot on the carpet.

"You will not?" she exclaimed. "Take your chair again and at once."

The dismissed clerk looked amazed out of bulging eyes. Was not all this a dream? She could not be awake! yet the words of the woman rang in her ears like the command of an enemy at whose mercy she was.

But half-conscious of what she did, Sybil obeyed and waited for the woman to proceed.

"You're in our way," said the stranger, unmasking in a manner which sent a chill to Sybil's heart. "I am here to tell you this and more. You are dangerous to us."

"To whom, pray?" cried the young clerk. "What can I be to one whom I have never seen till now—yourself?"

"It matters not. You are in our way. You must get out of it."

"You speak in riddles!" exclaimed Sybil. "I cannot understand."

"You must go away. You must go tonight."

"Then the Finding Bureau is a fraud? It does not exist."

"Only in imagination," smiled the other woman. "One must break the ice, you know."

"You have been sent hither for a purpose?"

"Yes, to tell you that you must go away tonight."

"Why must I go?"

"You are in our way."

"In whose way?"

"In our way. You are dangerous while you remain in town."

"But I am simply Sybil Gray——"

"That is just why you are dangerous," was the interruption. "You must go!"

There flamed into the young clerk's eyes a light which made them glisten.

"What if I refuse to go?" she asked.

"Then you shall pay the penalty!"

"And the penalty is——"

"Obliteration."

In another instant Sybil was on her feet, her face white and tensely drawn and the blood mounting to her temples proclaimed the excitement which filled her frame.

"I shall not go," said she. "I am not to be driven from this place by threats."

"Oh, you are not?"

"I shall remain where I am. You shall not drive me beyond that door against my will."

"You are defiant, my young lady," was the reply. "Simply Sybil Gray, you say."

"Nothing more to myself, to you and the world at large."

With the utmost coolness the girl's visitor took from the folds of her dress an object which she displayed slowly to Sybil's gaze.

It was a grayish cone, which she deliberately placed on the table with the apex pointed toward the ceiling. Sybil made a motion as though she would brush the object from the table, when her visitor drew a silver-mounted revolver, which she coolly cocked, with the rim pointing toward her bosom.

"Don't move, my young defier!" she said with complacency. "You will not go away? Then you shall remain."

With her unengaged hand Miss Howard struck a match on the edge of the table, and with the little flame touched the tip of the cone.

Sybil was fascinated by the little pyramid which had begun to smoke, sending up little spirals of bluish smoke, which had a pungent odor.

"It is the death cone," said the other woman with a glance from the smoking object to Sybil. "I am immune, but you—ah, you, my beauty of the glove counter—you shall read in the ascending spirals of blue the hand of fate."

The young girl, who had been awed into silence by the deadly thing, sprang from her chair and towered in the middle of the room, her gaze riveted upon the fated object and her nerves giving way under the terrible strain.

"Is there no escape?" she gasped.

"None now. You have refused to go away. You have defied us. A few days ago one of the nabobs of London disappeared. They called him the Golden Spider. It simply shows you that we can reach the rich as well as the slaves of the counters."

"But I will go!" cried the distracted girl, throwing her hands to her head. "I feel the effects of your cone. I am suffocating and you——"

"I am immune!" was the heartless reply. "You are nearly gone now, girl."

Poor Sybil could well believe it. The room and the smoking cone seemed to whirl before her. She tried to shake off the terror, she darted toward the table with outstretched hands, only to hear the laugh of her visitor and to see the mystic smoke spin in circles toward the ceiling.

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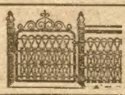

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War of the Airships;

Or, Blocking the Japanese Invasion

By Paul Gray

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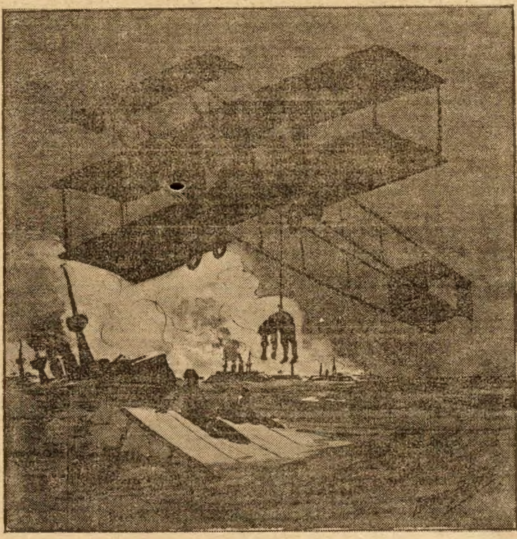
CHAPTER VII.

CRUISERS IN CHASE.

"GOOD boys," exclaimed Captain McKay proudly as he beheld every one of the men under him volunteer for the perilous flight against the Japanese fleet. "I'm sorry I can't take you all along, but if any of us come back safely, I promise you that the men who are left behind this time will share in the honors of our next attack. Now draw lots to find out who are to remain behind."

So, excited and eager, the Aeroplane Corps drew lots to see who must remain behind. That settled, Captain McKay sent the unfortunate ones back to shore with strict injunctions to watch for the return of the airships.

Next he drew around him the five men whom he had placed in charge of the five airships, he himself having charge of the sixth.



He was hauled up.

"My lads," he began quietly, "there is little to tell you beyond warning you to keep cool. If you do that, the rest will be easy. You will try to follow my ship closely. My colored signal lights will tell you exactly what to do—whether to advance or retreat, ascend or descend, fire either your lethite or your radite guns. If anything happens to me or my ship, of course Lieutenant Mills here will assume command and after him the rest of you sergeants in line."

McKay waited a moment and then asked: "Is there anything any of you wish to ask about?"

Sergeant Hughes, a brave, happy-go-lucky Irishman, was the only one to respond.

"And suppose, Captain, that none of us come back; who will take charge of us then?"

The laugh that followed helped to break the tense situation.

"Never mind, Hughes," answered the Captain, "you fight as sharply as you talk and I'll warrant it'll be the Japanese and not us who'll be worrying about getting back."

So, all things settled, the various men of the air repaired to the cruisers on which their airships lay, seemingly crouched for a spring through the clear sky above.

"And now, Captain Lacey," said McKay, turning to the fleet leader, "we are ready for you to drive us into danger."

In a moment a signal flag—reading, according to the code, "Follow with all speed"—was flashed from the cruiser Montauk. In another moment, the giant hulls of steel were churning through the quiet waters of the harbor and aiming for the broad Pacific.

With powerful glasses to their eyes, the captain of the Montauk and the captain of the aeroplanes stood together on the forward deck and swept the sea to the south in search of some sign of the monster fleet of the enemy. But the inspection was vain.

"You're not taking a straight course south," said McKay to Captain Lacey when they had got fairly straightened away.

"No," was the reply," "I'm trying to cut a circle. We're sweeping outward now but we'll soon swing around. I want to lay my course so that instead of running head on toward the Jap fleet we can go at them broadside. That will enable us to turn back quickly in case we should suddenly encounter pursuit."

"Then it will probably be a couple of hours before we even get a sight of the smoke of the enemy?" asked McKay.

"It's likely, yes," was the reply.

"Then I'm going to see who's faster, you or I."

"How so?"

"I'm going to make a trial flight."

In ten minutes Captain McKay had charged his engine, strapped himself and his men aboard his aerial craft and given the order to shove him off.

The aeroplane, with its load of humans and death-dealing apparatus, soared slowly but cleanly out from the forward deck of the Montauk, hesitated an instant as if deciding on what course to pursue, and then, like a frightened bird, darted away toward the dim shore line.

Captain McKay handled his airship with marvelous accuracy and daring. He dipped down close to the water and then shot upward with a burst of speed that made even the hardened men behind him clutch the slender steel supports of the bi-planes.

"We must be going about fifty miles an hour now," he shouted as he straightened his flyer directly for the land and about two hundred feet above the softly lapping sea.

"Easy that," came faintly back to his ears.

"Now," shouted back the Captain, slowing down to a more moderate speed, "take the glasses, Ball, and see if you can see anything of a line of troops without end far over there to the west."

Ball, unbuckling the powerful glasses from their case, swept the shore line.

"Nothing but trees and trees and trees," he replied after a bit.

"Well, keep on looking," was the Captain's order.

"Ha," came the exclamation shortly, "I think I can see a great brown worm that stretches over a mile or more and seems to be slowly working its way northward."

"Japanese cavalry that is," called the leader. "What else can you see?"

"It looks like another big brown blotch south of the worm but it isn't moving. But, say, it seems to stretch for miles and miles and miles."

"Sure," called back McKay, "you've spotted the army of the invaders, true enough. We're about as close as we ought to get, too, for we don't want any of their prying eyes to make the discovery that we're so close to them."

So saying, McKay reduced speed and curved slowly backward toward the American ships. Their speed and his own had widely separated the two vastly different styles of fighting machines.

They were easily making their way back from the test flight when of a sudden McKay called out:

"Ball, take up the glasses again and see if you can make out anything of that cloud of black to the southward."

The assistant glued his eyes to the glasses.

"That's smoke all right, Captain, and it comes from the direction of the Japanese fleet."

"That's too heavy for ships lying at anchor. Some of those ships are evidently steaming up for a fast run or they're already on it."

"Ha, I can see better now," exclaimed Ball with a trace of excitement." Looks to me now like one—two—three—four—five ships pointed all this way and making tremendous speed, if the smoke pouring out of them means anything."

"It's time for us to dig, then," said Captain McKay as he turned on full speed again. In ten minutes he was hovering about the Montauk.

Captain Lacey slowed down the cruiser's speed and, like a giant swallow, McKay brought his aircraft down to the deck with the smoothness of a settling feather.

"Well done," shouted Captain Lacey, "you've got the birds beaten."

Leaving his men to secure the aeroplane, McKay hastened up to the bridge.

"Captain," he said quietly, "fasten your glasses on that cloud of black to the south."

"Jap cruisers, as sure as you live," was the hurried reply. "They're bound almost straight for us. Some of their spies have evidently tipped off our movements to them by wireless."

"What are you going to do?"

"We can't stop to face all that power. We've got to turn back."

"But I've got to go forward!" said McKay impatiently.

CHAPTER VIII.

"PREPARE TO FIRE."

The faces of both the Captain of the cruiser and of the airships were tensely drawn with the vital importance of their position.

To turn back at this stage might mean the failure of Captain McKay's daring aeroplane campaign and a failure to check the Japanese invasion.

To go forward meant the almost certain destruction of the three American cruisers and the possible loss of the aeroplane equipment.

The two leaders argued the question at length, both with the single purpose of doing what seemed best adapted to help the interests of their country. Finally McKay said, glancing at his watch:

"It's past five o'clock; how long before dusk falls?"

"It will begin to grow dark in about an hour."

"How long will it take those approaching Jap cruisers to come within gun range of us?"

Captain Lacey again closely scanned through his marine glasses the advancing columns of smoke.

"In about an hour I should say."

"And how long would it take you to run from here to the protection of the seige guns on the San Pedro fortifications?"

"Another hour or thereabouts."

"Then you can risk maneuvering about here until almost dark, can't you?" McKay half asked, half insisted.

"Yes, I can do that, meanwhile turning our bows homeward and preparing to make the run of our lives."

"That will satisfy me then," said the aeroplane chief. "All I want is the dusk to hide our flight from those oncoming ships. As soon as it comes, we'll quit your decks and sail south. My one anxiety is to take the enemy by surprise."

"You'll do that all right," exclaimed Captain Lacey confidently.

While he signaled directions to the other two ships in his fleet, McKay flashed instructions to the members of his corps to prepare for a quick ascent.

The next hour was a critical one. While Captain Lacey intently watched the columns of smoke on the horizon grow thicker and thicker and the indistinct lines of the fast Japanese cruisers gradually take on the shape of powerful hulls and rakish rigging, Captain McKay put the final delicate touches on his air fleet.

"Hayes," said Captain Lacey to his chief officer, "we'll have to scoot back shortly, but I don't intend to turn tail until I've given those fellows one smell of our guns. Have the starboard guns on all ships manned, loaded and made ready to fire."

The necessary signals were quickly hauled aloft and a cheer came up from below as the eager seamen sprang nimbly to their cherished task. The order reached McKay's ears, where he stood close beside his biplane, face and hands smeared from working over its sensitively adjusted motor.

"Fine," he exclaimed. "That'll raise a cloud of smoke that will entirely hide us when we start on our flight. We'll trust the darkness for the rest."

Not many moments later across the glooming water came a muffled roar. It was quickly followed by another and then another.

"There go the first guns of the war," exclaimed Captain Lacey seriously. "I'm glad that we did not fire them."

The range was evidently too long, for no

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splash of falling shells disturbed the water about them.

"McKay," megaphoned the Montauk's captain to the airship chief, "are you nearly ready?"

"In five minutes, sir," came back the prompt answer. Then he signaled to the aeroplanes aboard the other cruisers:

"Rise when you see me and follow my flight closely."

As soon as an acknowledgement of the order had been returned, Captain Lacey directed that the fire from the starboard guns be opened.

Instantly from the sides of the American ships that lay toward the Japanese fleet there came jets of flame, followed by huge billows of smoke, and then the sharp crack of the small guns and the sullen roar of the big eight-inch cannon.

The cruisers shivered and shook under the recoil and the airships wavered and swayed from the shock. Captain McKay studied his apparatus closely to see that the cannonading had no injurious effect upon his slender craft. He was glad to notice that they took the tremendous rumble without any injury to their delicate adjustment.

The roar of the first discharge had barely died away before a second split the air. Then came a third and a fourth. Captain Lacey was keeping his promise to throw some smoke in the enemy's eyes, for ships, surrounding sea and sky were soon swallowed in dense clouds of it.

Then only a few yards from the Montauk's bow there was a sudden hiss and loud splash of water. Captain Lacey had evidently been looking for some such sign of the enemy's approach for he hurriedly megaphoned to McKay:

"We're within range of the enemy's big guns now and liable to be struck any moment. I'll have to turn back at once."

"Give me one moment," shouted back the aeroplane Captain, as with his men he took his seat at the steering gear and strapped himself to his narrow seat.

The pall of smoke still clung about them and, with the fast coming dusk, furnished the screen behind which McKay so ardently wished to hide his operations.

"Are you ready, boys?" he cried to his men.

"All ready, sir," came the steady reply.

"Then we're off," he said, and, releasing his motor, he directed his aeroplane's prow directly into the sky as it soared gracefully out from the deck of the Montauk.

Almost at the same moment five other airships rose easily and followed closely in the wake of the leader.

"May luck be with the dare-devils," breathed Captain McKay as he tried to see the man-birds through the smoke and gloom. Then he turned his cruisers northward and under full speed started on the run back to San Pedro harbor.

Japanese shells seemed now to be falling all about him but fortunately none of them struck. In an hour he was safely back under the guns of the great new government fortifications and the five fleet Japanese cruisers, balked in their chase, turned back to rejoin their fleet.

Meanwhile, the Aeroplane Corps had not been idle. McKay did not alter the course of his bi-plane until he had reached a height of over a mile, the five other airships following close after him.

At this height he directed his course straight southward. In less than an hour, through the gloom ahead, he made out the flickering lights of the Japanese fleet. They seemed like those of some great, bobbing city.

"Advance six abreast," he signaled with the colored lights set conveniently above his head. Immediately the five aeroplanes in his rear swung into line beside him.

"Go higher," was the next order he flashed and instantly the six machines shoved their noses obliquely into the sky.

Each moment was bringing them nearer to the vast assemblage of opposing ships, yet the night was now so fully fallen that immediate discovery of the daring maneuver was no longer feared.

"Charge your guns with lethite," was now the signal. Instantly the crews were busy with the all-powerful new explosive.

"Check speed," was next signaled in green and red lights.

The six aeroplanes were now nearly two miles high and hovering almost directly over the biggest ships in the vast armada below. They were the battleships.

"Pick out the largest target you can find," was the next signal flashed in blue and white lights, and as soon as his men had had time to decipher it Captain McKay turned on two white lights. They read:

"Prepare to fire."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SKY RAINS DEATH.

It was a critical moment with Captain McKay. All his hopes, as well as those of the great country for which he was fighting, were centered upon the developments of the next few moments.

If all went well, if the small but powerful guns worked well, if the new explosives proved as destructive as experiments had promised, if the frail airships were able to withstand the impact, then the surprising Japanese invasion could be at least partially checked almost at its inception.

If the guns failed, if the explosives refused to rend and tear their way through heavy steel, if the aeroplanes could not endure the sharp concussion, then there appeared no hope of blocking the host from the Orient, and the country would seem to be doomed to be overrun by the little brown man.

With a prayer in his heart and a tense grip on his nerves, Captain McKay raised his hand and drew the signal lever, exposing two red lights, one above the other. It was the fateful order:

"Fire."

Almost instantly from each of the six aeroplanes resounded six sharp cracks, not much louder than the report from an ordinary rifle.

A moment later, looking dizzily down, the men of the Aeroplane Corps saw six blinding flashes of blue light. Then, hovering almost immovable in mid-air, unconscious in their excitement of the fact that their delicate aircraft had successfully withstood the shock of the discharge, the intrepid air-fighters beheld long, angry arms of red flame dart wildly out and then combine in one tremendous upheaval of lurid fire.

Following that came a concussion that shook the very atmosphere about them. Then blood-red masses were thrown up and all about as from the bowels of some huge volcano in eruption. Then came a roar as loud and awe-inspiring as if all the guns of all the fleets on earth had emptied their loads at once.

Captain McKay grasped his night glass from its case and turned it on the awful scene below. One glance explained the cataclysm. A lethite shell from one of his aerial guns had undoubtedly pierced the steel walls of a Japanese battleship and found its way into the magazine. The resulting explosion had blown the huge fighting monster to pieces.

The glare cast by the enemy's disaster lighted up the entire fleet. McKay could see wild disorder and panic on nearly every one of them. He quivered at the terror of the scene, then nerved himself to renew the attack.

Laying his glasses aside, he again pulled the levers of his signal station. Instantly two red lights, one above the other, flared out, repeating the order: "Fire."

Again the slender guns cracked as they sent their shells of lethite down through the night, now more brilliant than the sunlit noonday. This time, the volley was not such a random one as the first. The illumination had enabled the aeroplane fighters to sight their guns with more precision.

The result was accordingly far more terrifying than that following the first discharge. This time three more giant fighters of the sea, cut to the heart by the insidious new explosive, shivered as some mighty giant in the throes of death and then spewed themselves in a lurid mass upon the surrounding sea.

The decks of the ships left studded the waters over a vast area were now alive with the affrighted crews. The fire scattered by the explosion had reached the wooden works of some of the transports, colliers and supply ships and started a conflagration that resisted the efforts of the men aboard to subdue.

Before there was opportunity to recover from the first terrifying and mystifying surprise, McKay, hardened now to his direful task, again flashed the two red lights, one above the other.

Again the six slender guns spit out their charge of death, and again below were enacted scenes similar to the dreadful ones that had preceded. This time the aim was more unerring than before, since five ships, a battleship and four fast and powerful cruisers, shook violently and then scattered themselves in a mass of red and yellow flame into the remaining terrorized ships.

So sudden and—to the Japanese fleet—so unexplainable had been the mysterious attack, and so terrific the destruction that followed it, that not even the skilled commanders—some of whom had stood the brunt of naval fire in the war with Russia ten years before—had had time to rush to their decks, survey the dire scene and bring their terrified crews back to their senses.

Captain McKay then concluded to change his tactics. He ordered his corps to follow him further south, where, surrounded by a thin cordon of fighting ships, lay a thick array of supply ships, all evidently impressed from the merchant marine and all easily vulnerable to the weapons of sea conflict.

"Give them half a dozen volleys," was the Captain's order when his ships of the air had followed him till they hovered over the stomach of the invaders.

Quickly the little guns on high cracked out spitefully. The result was not so appalling in deafening noise, but the results were far more spectacular.

The lethite flames spread with the speed of lightning flash across decks, into cabins and up rigging. Almost in a twinkling nearly a dozen more ships were enwrapped in flames, their decks a maelstrom of frantic men seeking some way of escape.

Lieutenant Mills curved his aeroplane to within speaking distance of Captain McKay.

"Why not try the radite on them now, Captain?" he shouted. "It would just about wipe them all out."

"No," called back the leader; "that would be too horrible, even for war. Many of the poor fellows down there are only merchant seamen, not regular combatants. We can afford to be lenient with them. We'll try the radite on the fighters."

So saying, the Captain signaled "Follow me," and shot swiftly back to where the great steel men-of-war lay wrapped in smoke and flame, but with order slowly taking the place among the men on deck of the panic which had prevailed following the first attack of the aeroplanes.

"Radite now," signaled McKay in the van of the airships.

Taking careful aim at the clustered ships as the flying aircraft came almost to a halt over battleships and cruisers, the gunners behind six slender steel instruments of war swung the lever that discharged them.

There was a faint crack, a flash of fire, a curl of smoke from the mouths of the guns. In another moment through the glare of the burning shipping arose faint human cries. The distance was far but the agony in the voices reached even above the roar of the flames.

Captain McKay, catching the terrifying sound, and anxious to note the effect of the new explosive, now employed for the first time in an actual war, swung his glasses to his eyes and directed them below.

The sight, through the glimpses he caught of it as there came rifts in the heavy clouds of smoke, was horrifying. Nerved as he was to awful sights, McKay shuddered at this.

The new explosive had evidently done its work well. The decks of every warship beneath them showed like a shambles. Men by the scores, by the hundreds, lay scattered about, blown headless, armless and legless. Only here and there could he see an uninjured man left.

Like a giant scythe the radite, exploding, appeared to have lain low everything in its path. Between decks, probably, and protected by the thick armor there were seamen undoubtedly left to man the stricken ships, but above decks there had been practically complete destruction.

"War is certainly hell," breathed the Captain as he put aside the glasses. Then shaking himself up as if ridding himself of some horrid nightmare he flashed the signal lights:

"Prepare for another volley of radite."

Before the flash of his colored lights had died away, he felt a sudden jar of his machine. A quick glance showed him that a section of his silken wing had been perforated and one of the steel rod supports bent. At the same instant came from below the reverberation from the discharge of small guns.

The enemy had discovered the Aeroplane Corps in the heavens above them and had turned their cannon upon them.

CHAPTER X.

THE WHITE FLAG.

Even as the slender guns of his aerial squadron cracked again with a discharge of the death-scattering radite, Captain McKay flashed a warning from his lights:

"Ascend higher at top speed. We are within the enemy's range and they are firing at us."

At the same moment he drove his aeroplane close to that of Lieutenant Mills and shouted:

"If anything happens to me within the next five minutes, you take command and get back to San Pedro as fast as you can. Then attack the army as we have planned. But give 'em another volley of radite here before you retire."

Thus, while five airships soared upward out of danger, Captain McKay held his machine steady—a splendid mark for the rapid fire guns of the enemy. In the darkness, however, it was only to be located in the heavens by the flash of its colored signal lights. Once those were turned off, any fire directed against it must be only at random.

McKay turned to his two assistants behind him.

"Boys," he exclaimed, "we're going to make one final dash at them. I'm going low down so that you can't miss them. Get ready to load and fire as fast as you can and give 'em the lethite and the radite alternatively."

The pair bent to prepare for the appalling task, eyes averted from the dread scene beneath them.

The Captain, meanwhile, dipped his machine steadily downward until the great ships seemed less than half a mile below him. Then the full results of his daring attack dawned upon his staring eyes.

Five huge battleships and as many cruisers, their sides agape with huge rents, their upper works entirely swept away and their decks running red with the crimson flood from hundreds of seamen who lay frightfully torn and helpless, floated aimlessly about on the fire-swept and smoke-obscured sea.

Suddenly one of the battleships seemed to shudder convulsively, her great prong-like bow rose high in air as her stern sunk rapidly beneath the swelling sea, and with a plunge that turned the water into a lurid whirlpool, the giant hulk sank out of sight.

Instantly the waves were thick with seamen, many dead, more wounded and unable to aid themselves, and still more struggling to keep above the surface.

The other ships, scarred by the attack, were in scarcely less critical condition.

The sight was so revolting that Captain McKay wavered for a moment in his intent to resume the assault.

As he held his craft poised almost motionless, there suddenly flashed upon him a white glare. Almost instantly another broad shaft of white light struck the aeroplane.

"Boys, they've caught us with their searchlights," he cried; "we'll have to let

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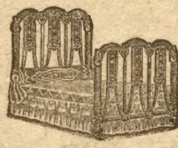

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them have another volley or two in self-defense."

The destructive lethite and the deadly radite emptied themselves again upon the unscathed fighting ships below. The distance was so much shorter and the aim so much better that the destruction wrought now was two-fold greater than it had been when the ships soared higher in the heavens.

But the enemy had partially recovered from their panic now. Many of their searchlights were at play on the sky and the rattle of a steady fire from their small guns punctuated the roar of the flames and the occasional bursting of some ship's magazine.

Fortunately the smoke from the blazing vessels was so heavy that from the decks below only fleeting glimpses could be caught of the Captain's aeroplane.

These were sufficient, however, to furnish the Japanese gunners with the general range and they proceeded to pour out a continuous fire.

McKay heard the hiss of the enemy's flying cartridges grow more frequent. Several times, too, he felt his machine tremble under him as one of the shots cut its way through the frames or rasped against his steel supports.

Then as he rose higher out of danger he saw a sight that made him burst into a cry of joy.

To the west the uninjured warships were beginning to maneuver, led by one that was already under fair speed and pointing its nose straight out to sea.

"Boys," he shouted, "the Japs are fleeing. We've driven them off. They're deserting their army."

The Americans looked below and a shout of joy burst from their throats as they beheld the enemy's warships making for the open sea.

"Let 'em have it again," cried the Captain as he steered his aeroplane deftly toward the fleeing vessels.

Four times the airship gun flashed its load of destruction and death at the rear craft in the retreating line. One of them, huge gaps torn in its sides, wobbled unwieldily and then settled in the sea, disappearing finally just as its magazine burst, throwing living and dead wreckage high in air.

The second vessel struck was able to make its way slowly after the rest of the retreating line, though apparently so badly damaged that it seemed impossible for it to remain long above water.

"That's enough, lads," exclaimed McKay, as he gave up the chase and rose to meet the remainder of his corps, "we've driven them off; we can afford to have a little mercy now."

Lieutenant Mills brought his craft within hailing distance of the Captain, who meantime had seen that one of the aeroplanes was making slow progress and appeared to be in trouble.

"I've got good and bad news, Captain," Mills called.

"What's the matter with Number Three?"

"One of those volleys from below ripped one of her wings and struck Clayton, her gunner. I'm afraid he's dead."

McKay grabbed up his glasses with one hand and swerved his craft toward the injured aeroplane with the other. Getting close, he beheld the gunner strapped tight in his seat, but with his white face drooped forward on his chest and his arms hanging limply.

"Dead?" he asked awedly of the remaining two members of the crew.

They gravely nodded their heads in the affirmative.

The first man in history to die in an aeroplane in war, the Captain thought. Then it occurred to him that even though the man had been only severely injured, surgical aid of any kind would have been impossible in midair. That was something else the inventive mind of the American would have to provide for.

But the emergency allowed no time for further meditation. Even as he swung around, the man in charge of the other airship, Baxter by name, shouted:

"Captain, I don't know how much longer I can keep up but it won't be many minutes. Those shots from below have cut us up badly. The lower plane is pierced in a dozen places, several rods are badly bent and our gasoline tank has sprung a leak."

"Can you keep afloat long enough to get back to San Pedro, if you start at once?" asked McKay.

"Maybe, but she's getting awfully wobbly, and I can't make very much speed."

Even as Baxter spoke, the rent airship keeled suddenly and sharply downward. He had lost control completely.

At the same instant Lieutenant Mills swerved toward his Captain.

"There's good news, too, Captain," Mills called. "The Jap colliers and transports are raising the white flag."

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW FOE APPEARS.

The astounding news that white flags were flying from the Japanese colliers and transports did not deter Captain McKay from a more pressing task. Below him, disappearing toward the sea, he could see the damaged and helpless aeroplane with two living and one dead man aboard.

Throwing his speed lever around until the indicator pointed to "Full," he whirled his steering wheel until the airship was pointed almost directly downward.

In breathless suspense and clutching the slender steel supports to balance themselves, the Captain's two assistants watched his thrilling maneuver. It was plain that he was aiming to save his imperiled comrades but how?

They had not long to wait for an answer. Without taking his eyes from the aeroplane below, fluttering like a broken-winged butterfly as it fell rapidly toward the water, McKay called back to his men:

"Each of you loosen those coils of ropes and prepare to cast them for a human catch."

The ropes, used to fasten the airship to earth during operations distant from the housing place, were drawn down, each man making ready to cast as he would a lasso.

Before the Captain could reach Baxter's craft in his headlong plunge, it struck the water. The light from the burning shipping nearby enabled the rescue party to see just where the peril lay.

Captain McKay, reducing speed as he neared the sea, changed the course of his aeroplane, bending it gracefully around until it ran almost level with the water.

"Cut yourselves loose and catch the ropes we drop you," he shouted, "and don't forget to tie up your silent friend."

The Captain gulped sadly as he made this reference to the dead man. His regret was deeper over the loss of this one life than over all the dire disaster his duty had forced him to inflict on the Japanese fleet.

Slowly he brought his craft along until it stood quivering over the wrecked airship. The ropes were accurately lowered. The two men first curled the end of one about the waist of the dead man and made it fast. Then they fastened an end beneath their own shoulders.

"Are you all ready?" called Captain McKay.

"All ready," came the reply.

"Then haul," was the Captain's order to his men.

Slowly and painfully they drew one after another of the men up to their fluttering aeroplane. Before they were settled firmly their own damaged ship, drawn downward by the weight of its gun equipment, disappeared beneath the lapping waves.

Captain McKay's craft moved unsteadily under its added load. Once he feared it could not sustain the added weight, but by turning on full speed he managed to hold it on a fairly even course.

Flashing the signal "Return" with his colored lights, he scooted back to where he had left Mills and the others.

When within earshot, the Lieutenant called out:

"Jap warships still moving out, but they've left the wrecks of five of their battleships and at least that many cruisers behind to sink. A pretty good night's work, eh, Captain?"

"Yes," was the subdued reply, "but it's cost us one brave fighter and one of our ships."

Mills doffed his cap in silence as he beheld the spent form of the dead gunner lashed to the frame of McKay's airship.

"Back to San Pedro, all of you, as fast as you can," roared the Captain as his corps circled around. "All of you will probably be there before I arrive. Set the boys we left behind at work cleaning the ships up in a hurry for use tomorrow. And every one of you get a good night's rest. There's more serious work ahead of us."

The whirring motor wheels of the aeroplanes as they started back to their rendezvous told how quickly the order was obeyed.

Captain McKay's journey was much slower but none the less safe. It was but shortly after eight when he brought his overburdened craft gently to earth in the midst of an excited group of naval and military officers.

Captain Lacey of the navy and Colonel Briggs of the army were the first to greet him. Both men fairly threw their arms about the young airship captain's neck.

"Bless you, boy," said the Colonel, happily; "you've done the most wonderful thing in all fighting history."

"I never thought you'd come back alive," was Captain Lacey's salutation. "Lieutenant Mills here tells us you've done marvels."

"But I've lost a ship and one brave man," was McKay's modest response. "Let's do honor to him."

Whereupon the body of the dead gunner was tenderly borne away.

"We've already wired a message to Washington, reporting the extent of your feat," went on Colonel Briggs. "I can imagine how relieved the President and General Wayne will feel over your accomplishment."

"Yes," broke in Captain Lacey, "and the papers of the country won't do a thing to your name in the morning, will they? Why, I can see your picture and 'Captain McKay' plastered all over their front pages."

The young aeroplane chief smiled grimly.

"Let's not do too much crowing until we're out of the woods," he said quietly. "We've got the Japanese army to deal with yet."

"That's true," responded Colonel Briggs, "but the army ought to be as easy for your new engines of destruction as the navy. At least you won't have the fear of falling into the water."

"Well, from the experience of my two men who fell into the water tonight," was McKay's rejoinder, "I don't know but what fighting at sea isn't preferable to scrapping on land. The fall wouldn't be so hard, at all events. But I've work to do," went on the Captain as he turned to inspect his five aeroplanes in the flickering light about him.

"Boys," he ordered, to the members of his corps busy about the aircraft, "let your first duty be to replenish the gasoline tanks. Do your cleaning and shining up afterward."

"But you don't plan to go up again before morning, do you, Captain?" asked Colonel Briggs, who had kept close to the young officer's side.

"What have you heard about the Jap army since I left?"

"The big forward movement hasn't started yet and I am in hopes to hear every moment from my scouts that the setback to the fleet has forced them to alter their plans for an immediate advance of the land force."

Bustling up to the group of conferring officers, Lieutenant Mills interrupted:

"Captain, look up there in the sky to the south. That's the first time I ever saw green stars."

Captain McKay eagerly grasped the night glass his aide handed to him and scanned the sky in the direction indicated.

After a moment's inspection he observed calmly:

"Those are not stars, Lieutenant. Those are Japanese airships—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven of them. That means work for us."

This extraordinary story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. A lot of strange and exciting things happen. Read it. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It only costs you $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

Real Magnet.

"Uncle Rufus," said the young colored man, "how wud yo' hab laked to been body servant to Geawge Washington?"

"Go 'way, boy," responded Uncle Rufus, with a broad smile. "Go 'way f'um heah. Ef Ah had to be body servant Ah'd ruther be one foh President Taft."

"Think yo'd lak him best, eh?"

"Yeas, boy, en think ob dem fat possums arriving et de white house almos' ebry day."

MUST BE A SMITH.

"Now wasn't that a measly trick for the governor to play on his only son!" I groaned in disappointment, for I am the said only son and had just read, perhaps for the twentieth time, the sententious codicil which my whimsical father had added to his last will and testament and which seemed most effectually to bar me from the continued privilege of living on the interest of his money.

"The foregoing bequest of all my possessions, real and personal, to my son, Herbert Franklin Vincent, is hereby conditioned on his marriage within two years after my death to Miss Mary Louise Smith. In the event such marriage is not made the said property shall be devoted to charitable purposes under the direction of my friend and executor, Charles J. Barton."

I had been absent two years and, I now thought with regret, grieving my father by doing nothing worth while in the world. Out of respect to him and also prompted by natural curiosity. I had called on Miss Smith a few days after my arrival home and to my chagrin found that she was absolutely impossible as a prospective wife.

She was not "fat and 40;" worse, she was lean and 45—ten years my senior and a confirmed spinster. I was very much mystified, too, to find that she did not know my father except by reputation and that she was unaware of the fact that her name was mentioned in his will. I did not enlighten her.

"Surely father did not want me to marry the sort of woman this Miss Smith appears to be," I said to Barton. "Is it possible that we have found the wrong Miss Smith?"

"She is the only person of that name in the city. Your father told me so at the time the codicil was written in the will, not four weeks ago."

"The only one in the city." I was repeating, and suddenly I had an inspiration. I saw what seemed to be a feasible plan by which to escape the ridiculous requirement of the will.

My father had thoughtfully made ample financial provisions for the two years of grace allowed in his will and my first step in the scheme to secure the estate was to spend a good, round sum in ordering the following "want ad" inserted in most of the daily newspapers in every city in the United States of over 25,000 population:

"Wanted—To correspond with Miss Mary Louise Smith. Stricly confidential. Address H. F. V., Box 254, Richmond, Va."

I had not long to wait. I had expected a number of replies certainly, but I was not prepared for the perfect deluge that came pouring in from every section of the country.

There were several score signed Miss Mary Louise Smith, and many hundred written by Miss Smiths who had either "Mary" or "Louise" in their names, but who had not both, and who wondered if the name given would not do! And there were Martha Smith and Lou Smiths and other Smiths until I was fairly swamped with Smiths.

I found it necessary to employ a secretary, and for a few weeks I led the strenuous life, doing more real work than I had ever been accused of before, and having a bully time of it besides.

The weeks that followed were exciting, absorbing. I sat for my photograph and had it reproduced, not in dozen, but in hundred lots. Every week the list grew smaller as the ineligibles were eliminated, but finally there were left twenty-eight in as many cities and towns with whom I had arranged for a personal acquaintance. My secretary and I spent many days endeavoring to perfect an itinerary, and at length my unique courting tour began.

I need not give a particular account of my travels, though every day was packed with interest and excitement. I went South, as the most promising letters were from that land of warm-hearted and (it seemed to me) matrimonially inclined maidens. But I got no farther than New Orleans.

Three months later I walked into Barton's office and introduced my bride. He grinned, as if it were a good joke which he enjoyed that I had abandoned hope of securing the paternal estate and married for love.

But the grin quickly vanished from his countenance and was replaced by one of wide-eyed astonishment when I led him into his private office and showed him the newspaper accounts of my recent marriage to the charming and wealthy Miss Mary Louise Smith of New Orleans.

Without a word he took my father's will from the safe and spent what I thought was an unconscionably long time studying it. I knew he was looking only at the codicil, every word of which I knew by heart, and was not surprised, of course, when he wrung my hand in a second effort at congratulation.

As my bride and I were leaving the office he called to me:

"Here's a letter your father said you were to have immediately upon your marriage."

I append it hereto, as I found it not uninteresting:

"If you have married the only Mary Louise Smith I have been able to find in this city my money has fallen into the hands of a fool. If, however, you have found a loving wife from among the many Mary Louise Smiths who live in this big land of ours you have vindicated the confidence I had in you when I wrote the codicil which doubtless put you to thinking for one time in your hitherto thoughtless career. In the latter event please accept my congratulations and let Barton know; he never believed you had any sense."

Knew Its True Value.

Sylvester Long of Dayton, O., tells this story of some commercial friends of his:

A customers who bought in a small way from the wholesalers and whose credit was not of the sort known as gilt-edged, visited the city and purchased a $2,800 bill of goods, paying $2,500 in cash and giving his note for the remaining $300.

After the transaction had been closed and the paper and currency had changed hands the customer said:

"Now, after a deal of that size it is customary to give the purchaser a present. Come across with it."

"We'll throw in a pair of suspenders," laughed the salesman, temporizingly.

"A pair of suspenders, eh! Say, quit fooling. I really mean it. I expect you to do something in acknowledgement of my patronage."

The salesman went to the manager with the problem and the manager said:

"Well, if he feels that way about it we might encourage him a bit. We'll do something that ought to please him greatly. Give him back his $300 note. Make him a present of his paper. That will make him a cash customer, raise his credit and save him money besides."

The salesman went back, pleased to be the bearer of such joyful tidings of liberality in business.

"Well, sir," he said, "we've arranged about that present, all right. Here," with a flourish, "is your note. We give it back to you."

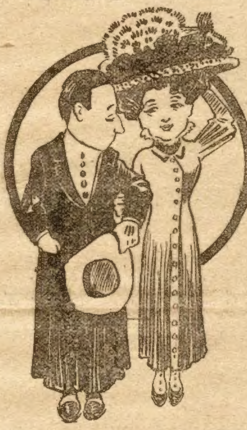
The customer did not seem enthusiastic. Instead, without looking at the note, he asked:

"Is it indorsed?"

"No," said the salesman in astonishment.

"Then I guess you better gimme the suspenders," said the disappointed customer.

Begrudging It Already.



Newhub—Let's swear off saying mean things to each other.

Mrs. Newhub—It takes two to make a bargain.

Newhub—It took five for the bargain I made with the minister for you.

The Fleeing Husband.

A little man slunk out of a house on the avenue, glanced up apprehensively at the front windows, then darted down the street. Before he had traversed twenty steps, however, he found himself in the clutches of a huge policeman.

"Let me go officer," he pleaded, as the grim custodian of the law held him fast.

"Not much I won't. What're you acting so suspiciously around here for, eh?"

"I live in that house there," was the discomfited man's explanation, "Don't hold; let me go, I say!"

"O, you live there, do you? Come, that's too thin. You just walk back to that house with me and prove it."

"But my wife is getting ready to spend the day out; you'll get me in a fix, officer!"

"That's what I'm paid for. Step lively, now, and we'll see what your game is."

So back they went, the officer tightly clutching his protesting charge. When the front door of the house in point was reached an upper window flew up and a woman's head popped out.

"O, was he trying to sneak off, Mr. Policeman?" she sweetly asked.

"He was, ma'am. He says he lives here?"

"He does, officer; thank you; he's my husband."

The policeman stared.

"But bring him in," she continued. "I want him to button the back of my dress before he goes down to his office."

GREAT Order FULTON by Mail UNEQUALED
Kentucky's Straight Whiskey
Express Prepaid from Distiller to You
2 Gallons for $5. 3 for $7.50 or 1 for $3, choice of Rye, Bourbon or Corn Fulton Straight whiskey highest medicinal thoroughly matured, in Myers patent 1 gallon demijohns. To prove Fulton is best you need
send no money
We ship on 30 day's credit, if you have your merchant or bank write us guaranteeing account. No C.O.D. Full Quart Bottles of Rye, Bourbon or Corn are expressed prepaid in plain boxes, either 4 for $3., 8 for $6. or 12 for $9.
FREE—4 miniature bottles of Selected Fulton with every 2 gallon order, 6 with 3 gallon orders, accompanied by cash. If not satisfied with whiskey return; and, if paid for, all your money will be refunded by first mail.
ADDRESS MYERS & COMPANY, Warehouse No. 172 COVINGTON KY.
2 Gallons IN DEMIJOHNS $5 Or 4 Full QUARTS $3
SOLE OWNERS U.S. REG. DIST'Y No. 2[illegible], 6TH DIST. [illegible] KY. Orders from [illegible] Wyo., Colo., N.Mex. and West thereof, must call for either 20 full quart bottles, 6 gallons in demijohns, or a cask, by prepaid freight. Write for express terms
Write for our booklet, A Fair Customer, [illegible] list sealed.

$1.50 CASH 75¢ CASH $1.00 CASH $1.50 CASH $2.50 CASH $1.50 CASH
Your Credit Is Good — At The World's Largest Homefurnishing Institution
Send postal today for Big FREE Catalog showing 5000 Bargains in Rugs, Carpets, Furniture, Sewing Machines, Go-Carts, Curtains, Etc.
We sell more housefurnishings than any other five concerns combined. There are two strong reasons why we do. First: Our Easy-Way-to-Pay-Plan is the most dignified—the easiest Credit System in existence. On small monthly payments we furnish your entire home and no one will know you buy on credit—our plan is private and confidential.
Second: Michigan is the world's greatest furniture producing state—all dealers and mail order houses come here to buy. Now, we will sell to you just exactly as low as we sell to a dealer and if you will write a postal today for our big Easy-Way-to-Pay-Book you will see the Lowest Prices in the world on Guaranteed Homefurnishings.
You will be astonished at our great offers, and delighted with our magnificent furniture—the catalog explains everything. No Interest—No security. Write us a postal today for big Free Catalog.
The sample bargains shown above are all shipped on credit. Just send the small cash payment mentioned under the article—and when you have examined the goods in your home and are pleased with your purchase, you begin paying the balance in easy monthly installments. On this same Easy-Way-to-Pay-Plan we will furnish entire home outfits. Free Catalog gives prices and particulars.
Our Rug and Carpet Department is the largest in the world and offers enormous varieties to select from at the lowest prices you ever heard of.
Our high grade Art-Style furniture is the kind you will be proud to have in your home. Rich looking, substantial—solid—built to last, and costs less than you pay other concerns for the ordinary kind.
We guarantee satisfaction with every purchase and refund the money sent us besides paying all freight charges on anything you don't want to keep.
People's Outfitting Co., 629 Sixth St., Detroit, Mich.

Dunner's Entertaining Book.

The most indefatigable book agent in our place is Mr. Dunner. The other day he called upon Colonel Bangs of the Argus, and the following conversation ensued:

Dunner—"I wish to——"

Colonel—"I don't want any."

Dunner—"I say that I desire to——"

Colonel—"Makes no difference; I don't want it."

Dunner—"To see you for a few moments alone in order to——"

Colonel—"No use. I've got a closet full of 'em at home already. Shut that door after you when you go out, will you? Good morning."

Dunner—"I don't think you understand me. I called——"

Colonel—"Oh, yes, I do. I understand you perfectly, Mr. Dunner. I know exactly what you want. You've got under your arm some sample sheets of a life of Christopher Columbus, which is to be issued in numbers at fifty cents apiece. It is full of preposterous old pictures of Columbus landing on the shores of the new world, with three or four people around him, dressed like the ghost in 'Hamlet,' and a dozen or two naked niggers bowing down before him, and wondering what in thunder he means by standing there waving a flag with one hand, and brandishing his sword with the other. That's what you've got, and you want me to subscribe for it."

Dunner—"Nothing of the sort, sir."

Colonel—"Or else you've got a specimen copy of a new illustrated history of the United States, with cuts of General Washington's horse standing on three legs, while a cannon ball whistles by him, which George is trying to catch in his hat. And it has a lot of portraits of celebrated Americans which look as if they were drawn to go on rag babies, and a representation of the battle of Bunker Hill, in which one man is lying on the ground while another rams a bayonet in him, and all the rest huddle around and don't do anything. I've seen 'em often. We use 'em for starting the fires up at our house. You can't sell any to me."

Dunner—"You are very much mistaken, Colonel; I——"

Colonel—"Oh, well, it makes no difference. It's something or other of that kind. The 'Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence,' maybe, with a wry-necked American eagle screaming on the title page; or 'Adventures on the Plains,' written by some bald-headed lunatic, who's been out there skeeting round among the Indians; or a 'Farmer's Guide,' which instructs the agriculturist not to knock his watermelons off the trees until they get yellow; or some such slush as that. I've had lots of 'em. But I'm not buying any now. So good morning; I see you're in a hurry."

Dunner—"Colonel, the fact is, that I wanted to put an advertisement in your paper."

Colonel—"An advertise—why, sit down, my dear sir. Excuse me for keeping you standing. Take a chair. There, now. Now what can I do for you?"

Dunner—"I have here a very interesting and valuable book, the 'Life of Bishop Potts, the Mormon Saint.' Look at it. It gives an inside view of Mormonism, exposes all their mysteries, and tells a story that must thrill the soul of the entire nation."

Colonel—"Capital book; excellent; the very thing to sell; just what the people want. Now you want to advertise it, do you?"

Dunner—"Yes; I'd like to have this prospectus inserted ten times."

Colonel—"Ten—yes; ten fifteens—one hundred and fifty at ten cents a line is fifteen—yes, fifteen dollars."

Dunner—"You think it will help the book?"

Colonel—"Think? I know it. All a book like that wants is to have public attention directed to it. People'll just go for it."

Dunner—"And now about paying for the advertisement. Fifteen dollars I think you said?"

Colonel—"Yes, fifteen."

Dunner—"Jes so. I sell the book at $3.50, but I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to put it to you at $1.50, and send you round ten of 'em. Ten times $1.50 is just $15, and then we're square."

Colonel—"Ain't you going to pay cash?"

Dunner—"Oh, no; of course not."

Colonel—"Oh, you aint, hey? Well, I wouldn't touch your infernal old mess of truck about that polygamous beast of a Mormon with a forty-foot pole any more than I would any other carrion. It's nothing but driveling idiocy; and if you don't take it out of here along with that coffin-jawed hypocritical countenance of yours, I'll have you kicked downstairs by the foreman."

Then Mr. Dunner withdrew, and the colonel went back to work, indignant that he had been imposed upon. The readers of the Argus are not yet aware of the fact that a "Life of Bishop Potts" is for sale.

10 VALENTINE POST CARDS 10c
Lovely assortment, choicest gold embossed. Beautiful colors. Not the cheap kind. Write. Capital Club, Dept. 109, Topeka, Kan.

HEIRS Wanted at once. 50,000 estates seeking claimants. You may be one. Facts in free booklet O. Send Postal. International Claim Agency, Pittsburg, Pa.

MOTHERS Your children cured of BED-WETTING. A dangerous disease not a habit. Don't neglect it now and regret it always afterward. CURE GUARANTEED. Write today. SAMPLE FREE
DR. E. MAY, Box H 540, BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

FREE BELMONT RIFLE
This famous rifle free for selling 20 pkgs. ART Post Cards at 10c per pkg. Send for cards today. When sold, send us $2.00 and rifle will be sent you at once.
BELMONT MFG. CO., DEPT. 1, CHICAGO

SOLID GOLD RING FREE
To Ladies and Girls for selling only 24 sets of our beautiful FRENCH LACE DOILIES at 10 cents per set. Write for Doilies today. When sold send us $2.40 and we will send this beautiful Solid Gold Ring at once. Address NOVELTY SUPPLY HOUSE, Desk 35 Chicago

Be A Motorman
Double Your Pay. Hundreds of positions as Electric Motormen and Conductors waiting now for our graduates. Tuition small. We teach you at home by mail in your spare time for these good paying positions. Endorsed by Electric Railway Managers. Write today. The Wenthe Railway Cor. School, Gen'l., Office 202, Freeport, Ill.

Watch, Ring and Chain GIVEN FOR SELLING POST CARDS
Our American made, stem wind watch with beautifully designed case, factory-tested, guaranteed for 5 years, and exquisite ring set with a brilliant stone are given to boys and girls for selling 20 packets of high grade art post cards at 10c a packet. Order 20 packets today. When sold, send us $2.00 and we will positively send you at once the watch, ring and chain.
Palace Mfg. Co. Dept. 501 Chicago

YOU CAN STOP DRINKING
is now easily done through our method. Simple home-treatment. Correspondence confidential. Addr. E. Fortin, Chicago, Ill. Dickey Bldg. R. 33

POSTAL NOVELTIES
GET ELECTRIC DIAMOND PIN or FOUNTAIN PEN—FREE. REAL Satin Sofa Pillow attached filled lovely Sachet Powder. Decorated with sparkling Jewels. TWO FOR 25c. Lover's SERIES, softest tints and prettiest colors—never seen on postals before. Imitation Oil Painting. Five for 25c. VALENTINE POSTALS with enamel body and solid gold designs—Five for 25c. Handsome Florals ten for 25c. Use postals you buy as samples. Take orders for $1.50 sending money and names of purchasers to us. We ship cards return mail, and give you FREE choice Electric DIAMOND PIN or Self-Filling FOUNTAIN PEN. Write Eastern Trading Co., Dept. X, New Haven, Conn

EPILEPSY
Fits or Falling Sickness
November 18, 1909.
DR. FRED E. GRANT,
Kansas City, Mo.
Dear Sir:—I began giving your medicine for Epilepsy to my son, on January 2, 1901, and I am glad to tell you that he has never had the slightest symptom of the disease from that day. He is a bright, intelligent young man now, and I shall hold you in grateful remembrance as long as I live for saving the life of my son.
SAMUEL J. MYERS,
R. 2, Box 32, Grafton, Ill.
I wish every person in the U. S. suffering with Fits, Epilepsy or Falling Sickness to send for one of my large sized 16-oz. bottles FREE.
DR. F. E. GRANT, Dept. 71 Kansas City, Mo.

25 Beautiful Flower Cards 10c

This is our new and popular series of LOVE CARDS with quotations from the Poets. The cards have a beautiful rich background of gold, silver or royal blue which is extremely rich and makes a most charming contrast. The flowers in natural colors are red and pink roses, wild roses, tulips, poppies, carnations, geraniums, etc. You will be pleased and delighted with this charming collection which is a great bargain; 3 lots 25c; 12 lots $1.00 postpaid. J. D. WENDELL, Dept. 98, Chicago, Ill.

FRATERNAL PRESCRIPTION FOR NERVOUS WRECKS.

(From "Medical Reports.")

Thousands of men, nervous wrecks, have found the following "fraternal prescription" a blessing and a boon. Coming from a source of unquestioned authority, namely, Dr. Lewis Baker, College E. Bldg., Dayton, Ohio, it is presumed to be infallible. Such men lack aggressiveness, they are timid, nervous, easily discouraged, lacking in self-esteem and confidence. They suffer from cold extremities, thin watery blood, nervousness, sleeplessness, frightful dreams, trembling hands and limbs, unsteady gait, and an absolute inability to perform the ordinary natural and rational acts or duties such as any healthy normal man can.

The nervous man seems always tired and worn out. Retiring brings no relief. Sleep brings no refreshment, all because of an abnormal condition of the nervous system, brought about by—well, no matter what—the desire is for relief and freedom with rich, red blood surging through the body supplying the sensitive nerves with all the power of sensation, so that sleep is refreshing, food is delicious, work is play, play is pleasure.

Obtain three ounces of syrup sarsaparilla compound in a six ounce bottle. To this, add one ounce of compound fluid balmwort and let stand two hours. Then add one ounce of tincture cadomene compound (not cardamon), and one ounce of compound essence cardiol. Mix, shake well and take a teaspoonful after each meal and one when retiring until a vigorous, bounding new-health takes hold of the tired, exhausted nerves.

A Mean Manager.

Anxious Friend—Mercy! What's the matter?

Star Actress—Boo-hoo! Oh, that manager is too mean; he's trying to ruin my reputation.

Anxious Friend—The brute! How?

Star Actress—I refused to play in a new part, and he—boo-hoo—he hasn't sued me for damages at all.

The Substitution Evil.

"Am I really and truly your first and only love?" queried the dear girl.

"No," answered the truthful drug clerk, "but you are something just as good."

FREE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR OUR READERS

Rochester, N. Y., Feb. 1st. 1910:—The Board of Managers of Franklin Institute, Dep't. P 121, today decided to prepare young men free of charge for the next Civil Service Examinations for the Railway Mail, Postoffice and Customs Services. As only a postal with the applicant's name is required, a very large class is expected.

Summer Conquests.

"Are these all photographs of fellows you have been engaged to?"

"No. They're fellows who didn't propose."

"What in the world do you want of them?"

"Why, I am saving them to make a rogues' gallery."

BIG COMPANY DISTRIBUTES BIG MEDICAL BOOK FREE.

The well known Pierce Co. of Buffalo, is advertising its business by giving away free of charge copies of the "People's Common Sense Medical Adviser." This famous book has 1,008 pages with engravings and color plates and the copies of the new revised edition that are given away are bound in cloth. This book treats of Anatomy, Hygiene, Medicine, Mother and Babe and every family ought to grasp this opportunity to get a copy free by writing to Dr. R. V. Pierce at the address given in the advertisement on page 5 of this paper.

The Important Part.

Mrs. Blinks—Did you see a lawyer today about that boundary-line dispute between us and our neighbor?

Blinks—Yes.

Mrs. Blinks—What did he say when you explained the matter to him?

Blinks—He asked me how much I was worth.

A Fine Kidney Remedy.

Mr. A. S. Hitchcock (clothing dealer), 886 Carrier Building, East Hampton, Conn., says if any reader afflicted with a kidney or bladder trouble will write to him he will direct them to the splendid home remedy he so successfully used. He is glad to do this and does not wish you to send him money.

Never Idle.

Mrs. Stub—What kind of a meter was that the gas company placed in the basement, John?

Mr. Stub—I don't know, Maria, but I think it belongs on an automobile.

Mrs. Stub—Automobile?

Mr. Stub—Yes, from the way it registers the flow of gas it must be a speedometer.

Every Lady Read This.

Years ago when I was a sufferer, an old nurse told me of a wonderful cure for Leucorrhœa, Displacements, Painful Periods, Uterine and Ovarian troubles. It cured me in one month. It is a simple, harmless lotion that can be prepared by any one having the recipe. I will send it free to every suffering sister who writes to me. Address Mrs. A. Hudnut South Bend, Indiana.

Had Enough Eggs.

First Barber—I bet that fellow is a bum actor.

Second Barber—Why?

First Barber—When I asked him if he wanted an egg shampoo, he put on his hat and walked right out.

AGENTS WANTED

Fine Pocket Knife FREE

To Agents. Send No Money. Your name and address put in handle—no extra charge.

SALESMEN make quick, big profits selling our scientifically tempered

PHOTO POCKET KNIVES

Be your own boss. Write at once for good money-making proposition and exclusive territory. (3)

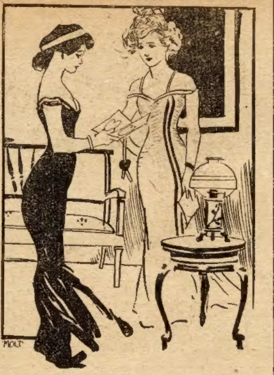
CANTON CUTLERY CO., Dept. 31 CANTON, OHIO

AGENTS—My Sanitary Coffee and Tea Makers produce a pure, sweet cup. Needs no settler nor strainer and never wears out. Saves tea and coffee, money and health. Every wife buys at sight. New inventions. Send 15c for 50c size of either, postpaid, or will send sample of both for 25c. Without question the two best selling articles ever invented. Order both.

COFFEE MAKER TEA MAKER

Dr. Lyons, 1457 Day St., Pekin, Ill.

Classification.



Gertrude—The sending of valentines is a quaint old custom.

Georgie—Yes, merely an innocuous form of the anonymous letter habit.

Enforced Economy.

"It's all very well for you to preach economy," said his wife; "but I notice whenever I cut down expenses that you smoke better cigars and spend more money for your own pleasure than at any other time."

"Well, confound it, what do you suppose I want you to economize for, anyway?"

Red Ears and Kisses.

Cynthia—Love is blind, Jason.

Jason—It is color blind, Cynthia.

Cynthia—You think so, Jason?

Jason—I know it. When a fellow's at a corn husking and he's in love and he can kiss a pretty gal if he finds a red ear, why, by gum, all the ears look red.

Heard on the Fast Freight.

Sandy Pikes—It says here, pard, dat President Taft often walks three miles after dinner.

Gritty George—Nothing like being a President, pard. We walk ten and thirty miles after dinner and then don't locate even a turkey bone.

Bravery Its Own Reward.

The lady (to hero who has risked his life to save her little dog from a watery grave, and looks for some reward)—Poor fellow, how wet and cold you are! You must be soaked through to the skin. Here—I'll give you some quinine pills; take a couple now and two more in an hour's time.

Aroused Her Suspicion.

Mabel—Why in tears? Doesn't the ring please you?

Helen—Oh, it is beautiful, but I fear that the stone is imitation.

Mabel—Why?

Helen—Arthur didn't say anything about returning it in case I don't marry him.

The Harmless Foe.

"Your political antagonist is calling you every name he can think of," said the agitated friend.

"Don't interrupt him," answered Senator Sorghum. "It is better to have a man searching the dictionary for epithets than going after your record for facts."

Belated.

"That is a beautiful song," he said, as the fair maid arose from the piano. "It simply carries me away."

"I'm sorry," she rejoined, as she made an unsuccessful effort to strangle a yawn, "that I didn't sing it two hours earlier."

A KNOCK-OUT BLOW.

Young Clarence Mahoney O'Toole
With a keg of gunpowder did foole;
Straight up from the alley
Young O'Toole did sally—
To return when the weather gets coole.

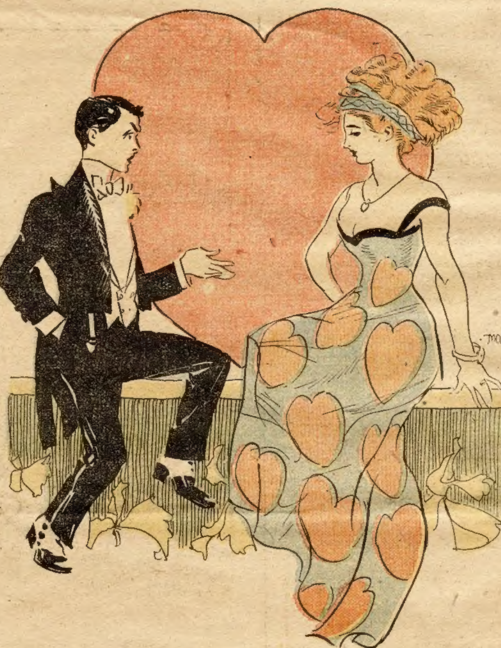
Not Quite All.

"There is a big sale on at a mammoth department store."

"I suppose all the women in town are there?"

"No; a few are out in the cemetery."

UP TO FATHER.



He—Will you be my valentine?
She—Yes, if you can induce papa to pay the postage.

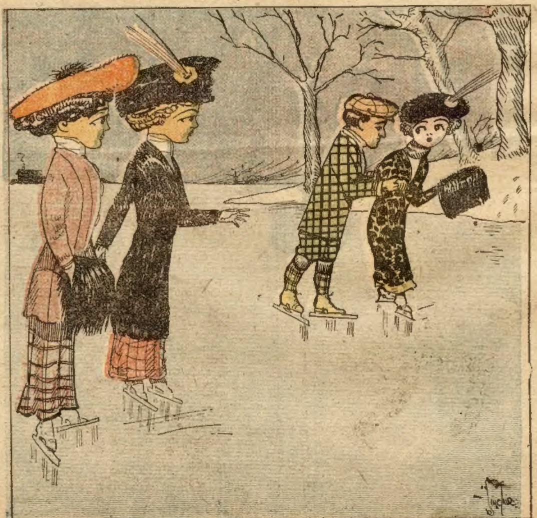
Neighborly Charity.

Bifkins—Today for the first time in a year I rejoiced to hear Miss Thumpem's piano going.

Mifkins—Something really worth listening to, eh?

Bifkins—That's what. I heard the installment people taking it away.

THE TEACHER'S FAULT.



May—Seems to me it takes that Elsie Shy a good long time to learn how to skat
Sue—Well, that good-looking Fred Sweet is teaching her, you know.

Her Mouth Was Closed.

Jack—Miss Peachy started to say something about impropriety of kissing the other evening, but she didn't finish.

Tom—Why not?

Jack—Because I took the words right out of her mouth.

Fault of the Cows.

"See here," protested the housewife, "there is water in the milk you bring us."

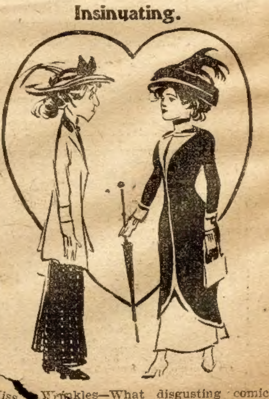
"I can't help it ma'am," replied the milkman. "My cows are all temperance advocates, and they will drink water in spite of all I can do."

Rather Frigid.

"The Bloobluds are considered the cream of society here, are they not?" queried the stranger within the gates.

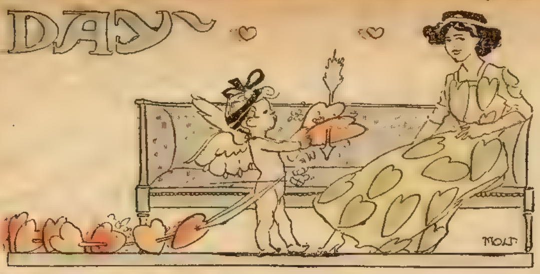
"Yes," replied the native, "and if you try to get into their set you'll find they are the cold cream of society."

Insinuating.



Miss Wrinkles—What disgusting comic valentines they have out this year.

Miss Cummings—No doubt you are well acquainted with them.



A Rare Accomplishment.

"My wife," remarked the mere man, "is one woman in a thousand."

"Out of the ordinary, eh?" we said

"You bet she is," he replied. 'Why she can actually put on a clean pillow case without holding the top edge of the pillow between her teeth."

Gave Himself Away.

Mrs. Sharpeye (at a hotel)—That couple try to act as if they had been married for years, but I know they are on their wedding tour.

Mr. Sharpeye—Guess not.

Mrs. Sharpeye—Yes, they are. He gave her the tenderloin of the steak.

A Young Joker.

Maisie (who has to wear her older sister's cast-off skirts, etc.)—Say, ma, what's the difference between me and Eve?

Mother—I don't know.

Maisie—Eve had to wear leaves and I have to wear leavings.

As a Reminder.

His Wife—John, do you remember what took place just three years ago today?

Her Husband—What! Is this our wedding anniversary?

His Wife—N-no. Three years ago today you bought me a new hat.

The Will and the Way.

Stella—Old Gotrox says he is dying for love of me.

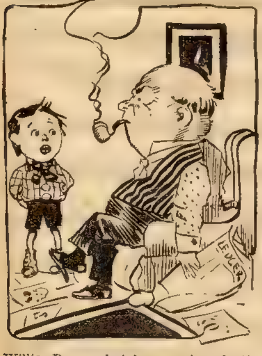
Maude—Well, in that case I'd advise you to lead him to the altar at once. If you don't let him have his way now you'll not show up in his will later.

Scared by the M. D.

The Doctor—Nonsense! You haven't got a cancer. Booze is what ails you! You must stop drinking at once!

The Souse—Gee! Is it so serious? Why, doctor, I thought it was some simple thing that could be helped by an operation.

Cynical.



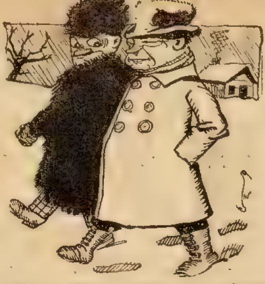
Willie—Papa, what is a comic valentine?
His Dad—All of them.

No Kick Coming.

Dinks—Don't you find it pretty expensive to keep up that big touring car?

Winks—Yes; I do. But I'm not grumbling You see, Helen agreed to give up playing bridge at the Skinflint's if I'd buy the car. Oh! I'm saving money, all right.

Obliged to Kick.

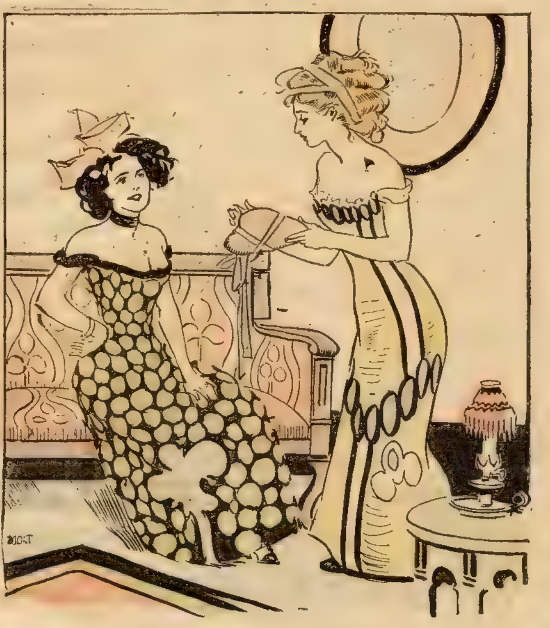


Brooks Dobson is kicking all the time he's working.

Crooks—A regular knocker, eh?

Brooks—Oh, no, he's a professional swimmer.

SARCASM.



Kitty—Jack is going to send Helen a valentine in which he calls her the prettiest girl in the world.

Peggy—That's mean of him.

Kitty—How do you make that out?

Peggy—To send her a comic.

Thoughtful Matter.

Friend—Haven't you named the baby yet?

Proud Mother—No; we must be very careful to give him a nice one, because there will be so many named after him when he is President.

Good at Saving.

"There goes Congressman Graft. He has devoted twenty years of his life to saving the country."

"Yes, I understand he has saved about $10,000,000 of it for himself."

A Specialist.

"Hello, mate! 'Ow is it you ain't workin'?"

"Well, it's like this: I works in a domino factory, and I puts on the spots, and they're making double blanks today!"

Encouraging Outlook.

"I've nearly decided to give up the study of law. I fear I'll find it too confining."

"Oh, keep on! You'll soon be admitted to the bar, and then you won't have anything to do."

Slightly Changed.

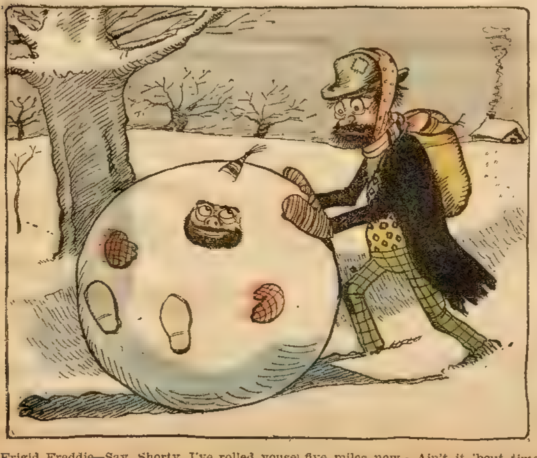
"Money makes the mare go"—
That saying's old enough to die;
For in this modern age, you know,
'Tis "money makes the biplane fly."

Oh, You Doc!

"Say, Doc, does it hurt a man to smoke cigarettes?"

"Never heard of a man smoking them."

WINTER TRANSPORTATION.



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Entered as second class matter June 25, 1887, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

Published Every Saturday
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GENTLE JABS.

The barking dog carries no bones.

If mistakes were crimes most of us would be in jail.

Why worthy women love worthless men is a mystery.

A man may be driven but a woman must be coaxed.

By no means do all the British voters dearly love a lord.

Every homely woman imagines that she has a beautiful soul.

An author is a queer animal. His tale grows out of his head.

When a girl says she feels "faint" it means that she is hungry.

If a man looks at his watch while you are telling a story, cut it short.

Strange as it may seem, a nagging woman often loves her husband.

He who throws money away gives other people employment picking it up.

Many a man hugs delusions who would prefer to embrace the real thing.

How much better a thing tastes when the doctor says you mustn't eat it!

Most of us are generous to a fault—if it happens to be a fault of our own.

A man's conscience seldom troubles him as much as the corn on his little toe.

Men's best deeds can be attributed to the influence of women—also their worst.

True friends are those we feel like kicking because they point out our faults.

New York now plans to have a world's fair in 1913. The idea is hardly novel.

A woman who is a has-been beauty is as fussy as a man who has lost his hair.

Go ahead when you think you are right, but don't expect the crowd to follow you.

She is truly a misguided woman who drinks in order to share her husband's loads.

If you have finished paying the Christmas bills now is the time to begin preparing for Easter.

Our idea of a fool man is one who treats new acquaintances better than he does old friends.

When a woman says she thinks another woman is prettier than she is it's a sign she thinks she is lying.

Doctor Cook's private secretary now deserts him. The private secretary may not be partial to gum drops.

It is said to be possible to go to the North Pole by aeroplane. However, there are a lot of pleasanter places to which to go.

There is a movement now to make women in the theaters remove their hair along with their hats so that persons behind them may see the stage.

Would Senator Chauncey Depew be willing to submit his claims for re-election to an impartial tribunal, made up, for instance, of people who are from Missouri?

The wise maid ascertains how much a young man can afford to squander for an engagement ring before extending the glad hand.

Grace Lanyon's Betrayal;

OR, THE MAN WHO VANISHED.

By Weldon J. Cobb.

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Begun in No. 2, January 8. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XXI.

QUARANTINE!

GRACE was naturally mystified at the appearance of the man with the bell. She was unable to understand why he wore the bell strapped to his arm. Everything about the place so far observed by her, was sinister and mysterious. Overcoming her timidity Grace advanced toward the man.

He did not see her until she was nearly up to him. He was very old and decrepit looking, and he blinked and peered as he lifted the lantern to make out the obstruction in his path. Then, with a quick nimbleness, quite remarkable in one so aged, he jumped back. He waved both his lantern and his cane at her as if to drive her away. All the time the bell, attached to his arm, jingled noisily. Grace was quite startled, for the old man seemed greatly excited.

"Back—back!" he shouted. "Right away! out through that gate!"

"One moment first, please. One word——"

"Not one. Out—out!" yelled the man persistently.

Grace was fairly forced back by the imperious, almost wrathful words and actions of the old man. She did not retreat toward the gate, however. Her interest in Cardona was so great that she resolved to stand her ground to parley until the old man became reasonable enough to give her at least some partial explanation.

"Hi, hey—the other way!" shouted he, as Grace neared a low iron railing dividing off a portion of the grounds. "If you cross that dead-line, you're settled!"

"The 'dead-line!'" repeated Grace in mystification.

"Yes—don't you understand? You've done it!"

Grace had quite tripped over the low railing in her excitement and restiveness. The old man ran to a post near-by. A rope hung down its side, operating a gong at the top.

Clang!

Just once the gong sounded out. A minute later a man came running up to the spot. He wore a half-uniform, and stared at Grace curiously.

"Who is she?" he inquired quickly, "patient trying to escape?"

"No," answered the old man, "stroller; I warned you, young lady. You can't leave now."

"I do not wish to leave until I have asked a few question," said Grace. "What is this place?"

"You go with me," said the newcomer, "and I will take you to some one who will tell you all you want to know."

"They're coming thick tonight, it seems," piped the old man.

"Yes—people seem just bound to break in," said the other man.

"Who's the fellow who came in over the fence?"

"Don't know, and he won't tell. He just raged like a wild lion when we told him he'd have to stay."

"One question, just one question, please!" pleaded Grace, at hearing this evident reference to Cardona.

"Well, what is it?" inquired the newcomer, but as he spoke, urging her on toward the building nearest them.

"You spoke of a man who had come in over the fence."

"Yes."

"Is he here now?"

"And likely to stay. Do you know him?"

"I—I saw him go over the fence," explained Grace hesitatingly.

"And what brought you here?" demanded her companion.

"I wandered in here not knowing what the place was—I don't know even now. Will you tell me?"

"You come with me and you will soon find out," answered the man in a meaning tone that somehow chilled Grace.

Grace traced an official imperiousness in his manner that she did not resent. The fact that Cardona was in this place and forcibly detained, made her willing to follow out the adventure to the end.

When they reached a neat, low stone building, her companion touched a button in its door. A neat-appearing woman in the garb of a nurse answered the summons. The man spoke a few words in an undertone to her and withdrew.

"Come with me, please," said the nurse to Grace in a pleasant, though somewhat mandatory tone.

She led Grace down a tiled hallway, exquisitely clean. At its end was a small apartment, half office, half receptionroom. She ushered Grace into this.

"Wait here a few moments," she said.

Grace sat down in a comfortable armchair. She was lost in conjecture as to the character of the place. There was a peculiar odor in the air, as of some mild disinfectant chemical, and at first Grace decided that she was in some hospital. Then she recalled the fact of the "dead-line," of the detention of Cardona, of herself, and she wondered if it could be an insane asylum.

She noticed that as the nurse left her, she touched a button and waited until, in evident response to the signal, a grim-appearing man came quietly to the door and stood there as if on guard.

"I am a prisoner, at least I am being closely watched," murmured Grace. "What does it mean? At all events Cardona is also here. That means a great deal to me, and I am content until I know all the merits of the situation."

Grace was glad to rest. The silence and comfort of the place lulled her senses to calmness and she felt that considerable of the Cardona interest would now center about this spot, where they had so strangely come under control of practically the same environment.

Finally a woman came down the hall. She nodded to the man on guard, who quietly disappeared. She glanced at Grace with some interest and sat down near her.

"I presume you wonder why you were brought here?" she said.

"Yes," assented Grace. "There have been some strange happenings."

"Of course, you did not come here by design?"

"It was an accident, or rather purely incidental that I came here," explained Grace.

"Have you any idea what this place is?"

"None in the world."

"It is the pesthouse."

Grace Lanyon gave a violent start. For a moment all color deserted her face and she trembled violently.

"The pesthouse!" she repeated in a sharp gasp.

"Yes."

"You mean——"

"The isolated hospital, where dangerous cases of contagion are housed."

"Like smallpox?" faltered Grace.

The woman nodded silently but impressively.

Grace did not speak for some moments. She comprehended now all of the strange occurrences of the past half-hour. Finally she looked up from a brief but profound reverie in which her quick mind weighed and estimated the situation, and asked:

"Am I detained here, then?"

"Yes," answered the woman, evidently the matron of the place. "You must not be alarmed, however, young lady. Our regulations are very strict. It is not usual that any one voluntarily intrudes here, and had it been daylight, you would have been cautioned by the sign over the gate. As it is, I hardly comprehend how you passed the gate. I understand, though, that the old gatekeeper was busy assisting in capturing a man who came over the fence a short time since."

"What will I have to do?" inquired Grace.

"You will simply allow us to take care of you," responded the matron in a kindly, encouraging tone. "You will have no complaint to make of our living here. The place is clean and homelike, and the fare is of the best. While you have not been directly exposed to infection, and while there is scarcely one chance in a thousand of your having any contagious disease, you will have to be vaccinated and visited daily by our physician. The active cases are in a building way over in another part of the grounds."

"And how long will I have to stay here?" asked Grace.

"At least two weeks."

"Can I write to my friends?"

"If you choose—just once, to inform them where you are and under what circumstances. Then, according to our rules, no further communication must pass between you until you are discharged as immune, unless you should be taken ill, when we will advise your friends of the fact."

"And the man who came in so strangely over the fence?" asked Grace.

The matron looked a little curiously at Grace for asking the question, but she replied promptly:

"He will be under the same restrictions. Write your name on one of the cards on the table there, please, giving the address of your dearest friend. Then make yourself as comfortable as possible, and try to live within all of our rules."

"I shall certainly do that willingly. You are very kind," said Grace.

Shortly afterward the matron went away and the nurse returned to Grace. She led her to a close room, where she made her sit on a chair while a powerful medicine was sprayed in the air with some powerful disinfectant. After that she led Grace to a cozy little diningroom, ordered a light supper for her, and later took her to a bedroom on the upper floor.

Its windows were barred and its door had a heavy outside lock. The nurse remained with Grace for quite a time, conversing pleasantly on ordinary subjects.

"We have a rule to lock everybody in their rooms for the night," she explained to Grace, "but a touch on the electric button in the wall will bring some of us to you at any hour, if you need us."

Grace found writing materials in the room and after the nurse had left, sat down to write a letter to Abel Vassar.

It was some time before she could decide just what to say. She did not wish to alarm Eva. She was fearful if she apprised Vassar of the real condition of affairs, that he might make some move to disturb the plan of action she had formed in her mind.

Finally she wrote the brief letter. It advised Vassar that circumstances had placed her in a position of comfort and security where she could watch Cardona. If anything should happen to her, Vassar would be at once advised. She bade him be patient and hopeful, and to take good care of Eva, as she was confident that she was following a line of action that would result in her learning the secrets of Cardona.

The next morning Grace handed the letter to the matron. She was quite interested in watching the strange life going on around her. She and the nurse took a brief stroll around the extreme corner of the fenced-in enclosure near the building that afternoon. Then she joined the matron, helping her to do some sewing, read, reflected, and was quite weary of the monotony and glad when night came.

Grace sat in the dark in her room that night looking out of the window. They were separated from the next building of the series by a low stone wall, but it was not so far away but Grace could see forms through its lighted windows.

She could even make out the faces of some of the nurses to whom that special building seemed apportioned.

One room was quite brightly illuminated.

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Why not keep in style? Make your light mustache a rich brown or black. Use BUCKINGHAM'S DYE All Druggists sell it. Stylish men use it.

Its shades were up, and as Grace was casually glancing toward it, some one entered the room.

It was a young girl, with a pale, impressive face and jet black hair. She paused in the center of the room, and the bright light fell full upon her. Grace viewed her as distinctly as though it were some picture thrown against a vivid background.

With a start, with a shock, Grace strained her glance.

She had never seen this girl before, but she had seen her portrait.

"Marvel of marvels!" cried Grace, starting to her feet in wild excitement and amazement, "it is the lost daughter of Abel Vassar—it is his missing Rachel!"

CHAPTER XXII.

AT LAST!

Grace Lanyon was fairly overwhelmed with her discovery. More than that, she was awed as she considered how some strange destiny had led her to this place, where circumstances seemed to focus all the forces of plot and counterplot surrounding the fate of the South American prince, of Shirley Moore, of the heart-stricken, desolate old Abel Vassar.

Rachel!

A thrill that made her heart leap with great joy pervaded all her being.

"It is she! Oh, I cannot be mistaken!" breathed Grace, as she continued to gaze at the beautiful girl, a moment, fully in view and then disappearing from the room, as though she had formed some striking part in a shadow picture or in a dissolving tableau scene.

Grace could not fathom this new mystery. She could not at all understand how it was that the missing daughter of her old protector should be here, at this place, so near to her sorrowing parent, yet as secluded and remote as though worlds parted them. She had, however, seen the cherished portrait that Vassar had of his lost Rachel too many times to make any mistake in identifying the beautiful girl.

Grace could not sleep that night. Her mind was filled with all the complex issues of the case in which she was vitally interested. She had become very friendly with the young nurse whom she had met the first evening of her arrival. During the afternoon this girl came to her bedroom, and Grace led the way into a general conversation regarding their peculiar environment.

"I would like to know the identity and history of one of your nurses, if possible," she remarked finally.

"Who is that?" asked Miss Evans, as her companion was named.

"I caught a glimpse of her at a lighted window last night, in the next building," explained Grace.

"There are so many nurses there," explained Miss Evans.

"This was a dark girl——"

"And many dark ones, too!"

"I believe I could point out her room," said Grace.

"Ah, that may give us some clew," said the good-natured Miss Evans.

Grace went to the window with her companion. She had no difficulty in designating the special window that had so fascinated her attention.

"Yes, yes," nodded Miss Evans with a lively interest. "I know the nurse you mean—Angel."

"Angel?" repeated Grace vaguely.

"Yes, we call her that, everybody does."

"The name sounds strange," began Grace.

"It is most applicable," replied Miss Evans. "She is a most beautiful creature, so kind, gentle and loving, that at times she seems to be scarcely of the earth earthy."

"But her right name?" asked Grace.

"That is the only name by which we know her," said the nurse. "She has no other. Her coming here was a mystery, it has been a mystery ever since. The mystery has grown into a romance, and there is not a person among us all who does not love Angel, and is praying that the great happiness she so deserves is to be the reward of her unselfish devotion to others."

"You interest me greatly," spoke Grace in a fluttering tone. "Please tell me more."

"Angel was brought here a long time ago," narrated the nurse, "under very peculiar circumstances. It seems that she was run down by an automobile and her head was badly injured. At that time we had no contagious disease patients here at all. In some way the superintendent allowed the girl to be brougnt into the building here, and she was given necessary treatment. It was our intention to send her to the regular city hospital, when our young Doctor Alva Dacre demurred. From the first he was interested in the case. He attended to her for several days. Then unexpectedly some contagious patients were brought in, and then, of course, the girl could not leave."

"And she has been here ever since?" asked Grace with eager interest.

"Yes. In a week she had entirely recovered from any apparent injury from the accident. When the period of innoculation had passed, she had endeared herself so to every one about the place, the circumstances surrounding her were so peculiar, that we could not let her go. Angel became a fixture here."

"Did you not seek her friends?" inquired Grace.

"We did," replied the nurse, "but unavailingly. When she was fully recovered from her injury, she appeared to be a bright, beautiful, healthy girl, always smiling, always happy, with not a care in the world to trouble her mind. We found nothing on her to identify her."

"But she told you——"

"Nothing," interrupted Miss Evans definitely. "The past was a blank—memory was gone. Like a being with her old life suddenly ended and her new life as suddenly begun, she seemed to settle down contented into the existence fate had cast her into, without a murmur or a single event linking her to old experiences."

"How strange!" murmured Grace.

"The weeks went on, the months. Angel was a busy, bustling helper with sewing and cooking. Then she became a nurse. Her patience, her deep sympathy for the sick were marvelous. She begged to nurse our worst cases. She seemed immune from contagion and weariness. She has blessed many a poor life, gone out in darkness but for her comforting presence. She has, indeed, proven an angel in this dismal place."

"How blessed! how grand!" breathed the sympathetic Grace.

"Young Dacre [illegible] her. To see them together, you would say that they were destined to meet as congenial spirits in harmony. The doctor called in the best city doctors, but they could do nothing to bring back her memory. Then Doctor Dacre heard of a great specialist in New York, to whom he wrote all the particulars of the strange case. The specialist reported that he could restore the girl to her old self. The charge, however, would be a $1,000. Since that time the doctor has been working day and night to earn and save the money. At last he accumulated the necessary amount. The famous New York practitioner will be here in a few days."

"And Rachel—Angel, will be restored to her old self?" murmured Grace."

"We hope so, we think so."

Grace said no more on that particular subject at the time. It was constantly in her mind, however. For several evenings after that she made it a point to engage Miss Evans in conversation, always leading up to an inquiry about Angel. Grace was interested in everything pertaining to the girl whom she now knew was the daughter of old Abel Vassar.

She could scarcely restrain herself from imparting the glad news of the discovery of the lost daughter to the anxious father. Grace decided, however, that she would be released from the place in a few days.

Meantime, a new event occurred which modified all her plans. She had deftly led Miss Evans to talk about the other patients in the place. It was thus that Grace gradually narrowed down her seemingly casual inquiries to Cardona.

It was with dismay and a shock that she learned that Cardona had been taken down with the smallpox, and was now under special expert care.

She mystified Miss Evans by her anxiety to learn the progress of the case, until she finally had to admit that she knew Cardona.

This led to mutual confidences, and one evening she told the nurse the whole story of her interest in Rachel and in Cardona.

Miss Evans was a kindly, sympathetic soul. Grace did not regret having told her everything. The nurse became deeply interested in the case. She agreed to make no disclosures without the sanction of Grace. She became as intent as Grace in watching the progress of the illness of Cardona, reported its details to her friend daily. Grace felt that she had, indeed, found a true friend, anxious and willing to cooperate with her in all her plans.

One night Miss Evans came to her with two important pieces of information.

She told Grace that the New York specialist had arrived, and that an operation on the head of Angel was to be performed that evening.

She told further that Cardona—was dead!

The warm heart of the ingenious Grace had beat in hopeful sympathy with Rachel as the first disclosure was imparted.

Her soul reeled under the direful shock at the unexpected news that Cardona was dead.

She could scarcely realize it. As she thought of what this tragic ending to all the plots of the impostor signified, it seemed as if the structure of her life had crashed into atoms.

What now of the secret of the iron crown of Avillo? What now of the whereabouts, the fate, of Shirley Moore?

When she had partly recovered her composure, Grace pressed her friend for particulars.

It seemed that Cardona was not even known by name to the hospital authorities. Nothing had been found in his clothing that would afford a clew to his identity or his friends.

"All they found," explained Miss Evans, "was a belt inside his clothing. It contained some bits of writing, some personal memoranda, it seems, but nothing about them telling who the man is."

"Oh," exclaimed Grace earnestly, "could you secure me that belt?"

The nurse hesitated.

"What will be done with it?" pressed Grace.

"It will be burred up."

"You must get it for me, Miss Evans," insisted Grace. "Do you not see that what is unintelligible to your people, may be most enlightening to me?"

"Yes, and I will try what I can do," said the nurse thoughtfully. "I could not bring the belt to you without having its contents thoroughly disinfected."

Two hour later there came a welcome summons at the door of the room occupied by Grace.

"I have had no end of trouble," reported the nurse, "and it is against the rules of the institution, but—here is the belt."

With trembling fingers Grace took the belt and eagerly inspected its contents.

Her eyes glowed, her heart beat wildly as she read paper after paper it contained.

Then, arising to her feet, hope and triumph in her face, Grace Lanyon uttered two intense words:

"At last!"

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The Middle Splash.

"That is impossible," said Senator Aldrich of a socialistic proposition.

He laughed.

'In its impossibility," he went on, "it reminds me of Joe Jobson's middle splash.

"Joe Jobson, a very ignorant and pigheaded chap, presented himself at the church with his infant son for the christening. The following dialogue then took place between Johnson and the minister:

"'What name do you give this child?"

"'Peter Ananias Johnson.'

"'Ananias? I refuse to christen the child in that name. Do you know who Ananias was?'

"'I don't know who he was; and, what's more I don't care.'

"'But Ananias was the greatest liar in all Biblical history.'

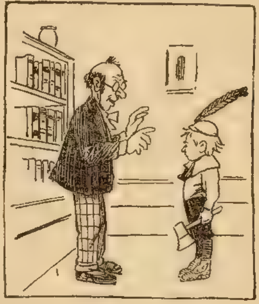
"'Well, that's nothing to me. My baby aint' no liar, so what's the difference? I want him christened Ananias because I like the sound of it.'

"'I won't do it. I will christen the child Peter Jeremiah Jobson.'

"And the minister was as good as his word, and as he repeated each name he sprinkled a little water on the infant's face.

"'And I rub out that middle splash,' said the father, heatedly. He rubbed his sleeve across the child's wet face and sprinkled a little more water over it. 'I rub out that middle splash, substitute this one for it, and christen him Peter Ananias Jobson. And that settled it."

Putting Him to Work.



Father (sternly)—What does all this noise mean, Tommy?

Tommy—We are playing pirates, pa, and we are going to the playroom to scuttle a ship.

Father—Well, just take a shovel and go down in the cellar and scuttle some coal

What He Missed.

Wedderly—How is it that you never married, old man?

Oldbach—Fate stacked the cards against me, I guess. When I was a young man I proposed to three different girls—but each of them came back at me with a 'No.'"

Wedderly—You're to be congratulated. Just think, one of them might have said 'Yes.'

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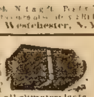

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BOYS AND GIRLS CORNER

The Storm Child;

Or, HUNTING THE KIDNAPERS

By J. M. Merrill

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CHAPTER I.

SEEKING SHELTER.

A FIERCE storm swept the valley of Clearwater not many years ago.

David Greaves came in from attending his few chores, dripping like a drownded rat. Little Gordon ran to him and held up his hands.

"Wait a bit, laddie," said his father, pushing his son aside. "Daddy is all wet, he can't take Gordon now."

"Want up, want up," cried the chubby boy of four, his fat little hands still extended.

"Take up Gordon till I get my dry clothes on, won't you, Clara," said the raftsman, addressing his wife, who at this moment entered from the kitchen, where she had been finishing the supper dishes.

"My, how the wind roars!" exclaimed the comely Mrs. Greaves. "Won't there be a flood, David?"

"If it keeps this up much longer there surely will," assented Greaves. "The water is tumbling over the rapids like an angry lion. There'll be no rafts to run for a while I am afraid."

The mother took the child while her husband went above to seek dry garments. When he returned, the storm had slackened. The wind fell to a dull moan and the splashing rain had almost ceased.

"It's a bad night for folks that are out," said Clara Greaves. "It seems as though we get more than our share of rough weather this fall, Dave."

The man of the house lifted his head and listened, unheeding his wife's querulous comment on the weather. There came the sound of lagging, watersoaked steps outside. Presently a muffled rap fell on the door.

Mr. Greaves sprang up and opened the door to an unexpected visitor.

A muffled figure staggered across the threshold and sank wearily into a chair—a woman with a child in her arms.

For some time the newcomer was too exhausted to give an account of herself. When at length she roused up, threw off her cloak and gazed about her, a comely dark face was exposed to the shine of the lamplight.

"Ah, Heaven, how tired I am!" murmured the woman.

The sleeping child stirred and opened its eyes, pretty blue orbs that looked up innocently into the surrounding faces.

"Your babe, madam?" asked Greaves.

"Yes, my only one," replied the woman. "We have tramped from Nigger Falls since noon. It has been a long walk, and I am beat clean out. Can you keep us tonight?"

"To be sure," answered sturdy David Greaves.

Little Gordon drew near and gazed with curious eyes at the babe in its mother's arms.

"May I kiss it?" he asked timidly.

For the first time a smile touched the woman's face. She allowed the boy to kiss the cheek of the babe, then turned wearily toward Clara, with a pleading expression on her face. Mrs. Greaves comprehended and at once opened a door, revealing a tidy bedroom, with white bed, dresser and carpeted floor. The woman got up and staggered, rather than walked, into this haven of rest.

She laid her babe, which seemed less than a year old, upon the bed and sank wearily to her knees, clasping her hands as she knelt, as if in prayer. Mrs. Greaves stood silently regarding the scene.

"Pitty baby," said Gordon, going to his father, his black eyes wandering after the disappearing couple.

"Yes, Gordon, a nice little kiddy," and the raftsman smiled and lifted his only son to his knee. The two talked and visited till the wife and mother came back to the livingroom, with the door to the bedroom closed upon their uninvited guest.

"Well?" and Greaves regarded his wife curiously.

"What a sad face," returned the wife. "She has met with some misfortune, I feel sure—and the babe is really pretty."

"Pitty baby," mimicked Gordon.

"Did you learn her name, Clara?"

"No. I did not wish to appear too curious. That knowledge will come later. She is in trouble and needs rest and something to eat."

The speaker went to the kitchen and set the teakettle to buzzing on the stove. Meantime, Mr. Greaves talked to Gordon and felt that in the morning their visitor would be willing to tell her story.

Clara Greaves prepared hot tea and toast for her visitor and disappeared once more within the little bedroom. Gordon's eyes grew heavy. David prepared him for bed, and soon the little lad was sleeping peacefully in his small bed under the eaves.

That evening the raftsman and his wife held a long confab in the kitchen beside the genial heat of the cook stove. The chill in the October air rendered a fire most enjoyable.

"She has gone to bed now," said Clara, "and will get a good night's rest after her long tramp with her child in her arms. She has been badly used by relatives, and fled to escape persecution."

"Did she tell you this, Clara?"

"Yes, and that she was seeking a home among strangers."

"How about her husband?"

"He is dead. She has been living with his relatives, and there has been trouble. She did not enter into particulars, or explain how she came to fly from home. I learned enough to satisfy me that she is a misused young woman."

"The babe is her own——"

"Why, of course. Did you think otherwise?"

"I thought of kidnaping," said Greaves gravely. "You know such things often happen, and I did not see the slightest resemblance between this woman and child. Her hair is black as ink, while the babe is a decided little blonde fellow."

"Fellow, indeed!" exclaimed the wife.

"Well, and why not, Clara?"

David Greaves laughed at the shocked expression on his wife's face.

"Well, but it's a girl, David; girls are not fellows."

"Aren't they? Well, we shall have to call the kiddie Sissy, then, instead of fellow. It's all the same to me in any event. I suppose the woman will go on her way in the morning and will soon be forgotten. I imagine there's a story connected with her, all the same. I noticed that the babe was dressed nicely, while its mother wore plain print. That's rather strange, isn't it?"

"I don't think so. Mothers of poor children often go hungry to dress their offspring in nice clothes."

"Possibly," admitted the husband, yet at the same time he shook his head doubtingly.

The storm had spent its fury and wailed off into the gulches along the Clearwater as if ashamed of its late violence.

Once, in the night, little Gordon awoke and called for "pitty baby." Evidently he had been dreaming. He turned over, hugged his dimpled chin into his fat hands and dropped again into dreamland.

Clara was up early, bustling about, yet striving to make as little noise as possible, being anxious for her guest to sleep away her recent exhaustion. Breakfast was ready and David had drawn up to the table, when a low wail from the bedroom attracted the notice of all.

"Pitty baby!" exclaimed little Gordon, running to the door in his night dress, striving vainly to turn the knob.

"Come away, darling," ordered his mother.

"Want to see pitty baby," and Gordon tugged at the knob.

"Goodness me, Gordon Greaves, why can't you mind?"

Mrs. Greaves went to the boy and grasped his arm. At the same instant his chubby hand had succeeded in opening the door.

"Oh, did you ever?" and Clara shook her young hopeful. Then she crossed the threshold and began an apology. "It's Gordon. Sorry to disturb you——"

And then she recoiled, since the bedroom was empty save for the now crying babe, which sat upright and pounded the pillow with its pink palms.

CHAPTER II.

NADA.

The raftsman's breakfast had no relish after that. He left the table and went with his wife to investigate. The bed had not been slept in, and it was quite evident that the woman had gone away without seeking rest. The child had slept through the night, and was now crying with hunger.

"It's a little queer," suggested Mrs. Greaves.

"A good deal queer," coincided her husband.

A folded note, directed in a rather irregular hand to "Mr. Greaves," seemed to open a revelation. The man took it and opened the paper with unsteady fingers. He read:

"To Mr. and Mrs. Greaves: I leave my daughter, Nada. Be good to her, and call her by your own name—mine it is not necessary for you to know. Do not search for me; it will be useless. I shall never claim the child. Be good to it, and rest assured you shall ever have the prayers of its misguided and unhappy mother."

That was all. No name was signed to the unsatisfactory epistle.

The raftsman looked at his wife. She returned the glance with one of inquiry. His glance followed hers a second later to the little tot squirming amid the pillows, a gold-haired, blue-eyed mite of a girl. And Clara had so longed for a girl! The man remembered, and said:

"It's up to you, Clara."

The woman smiled and turned to the babe. Gordon was ahead of her, his small arms wound about the [illegible] infant, his kisses almost smothering the little one.

The mother's eyes again sought her husband's.

"I am not sure what I ought to do, David."

"It's a nice, clean little midget, Clara."

"Yes, all of that, but we do not know what may be its history. What if she came from evil parents; we——"

"'Ittle sister," cooed the boy, hugging and kissing baby Nada. Then he whirled upon his parents. "My 'ittle sister! Keep her, mamma, keep her for Gordon!"

Despite his meager years Gordon understood something of the debate going on between his elders, and was anxious to decide in favor of the storm waif.

"Of course, if I were the only one," hesitatingly uttered the woman.

"You are not," broke in Greaves; "there's Gordon, and he speaks for the forsaken babe."

"I was not thinking of Gordon," said Mrs. Greaves. "He loves children, of course."

"And so do you, Clara."

"We all do for that matter. You are the one to decide; you are the bread-winner, David."

"A fig for such argument," and the stalwart man snapped his fingers. "You have wished for a daughter ever since Gordon came, and now here is your wish answered in an unexpected manner. Why not take up with the decrees of fate, Clara? Our boy needs a companion; he will guide the steps of his sister, and in after time we shall feel truly [illegible] doing something for a homeless [illegible] who has been deserted by a heartless mother. We will keep Nada, Clara."

David Greaves turned back to his breakfast as though he had settled a momentous question for all time. The infant was crying now, under the repeated hugs of sturdy Gordon.

The woman went to the bed and took Nada in her arms. She thought little of breakfast that morning, but paid strict attention to the outcast maiden of Clearwater. She examined everything about the child, hoping that she might find some clew to its identity. She was unsuccessful, however.

The day after the storm had dawned clear and bright. David stood in the open doorway, looking back at the group in the livingroom—his wife gently rocking, with a sweet-faced babe in her arms, with Gordon at her knee, patting the tiny feet which peeped from beneath the white skirts. It was a pretty, altogether comforting picture, and the raftsman bore it in his brain for many long years afterward.

David Greaves searched the woods and fields in hope of finding some clew to their last night's visitor. He even called at several of the neighbors, soliciting information. No one had seen the woman, and by noon the man gave over his search and returned home.

Two months later, when frost had touched the forest with a magic wand, David and Clara stood beside the rude pine cradle where the soft-cheeked babe reposed, and with clasped hands smiled into each other's faces.

"She is such a dear," said the wife.

"Then you are not sorry we took her, Clara?" he asked thoughtfully.

"My, no indeed," her eyes sparkling with earnest feeling. "It would not be home without little Nada, Dave."

"And to think that scare two months ago

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we had never seen nor heard of such a being," murmured he. "Strange how things turn out in this world, isn't it?"

"That it is," agreed Clara.

"Pitty sister, pitty baby!"

Gordon came running in and bent over the cradle, his chubby cheeks glowing with the frost and exercise, his cold red hands outstretched to clasp the sleeping child.

"No, no," cried the mother, drawing Gordon aside.

"Me want to kiss sister."

"Not now, your cold hands would wake her. Be quiet, Gordon. You love sister, don't you?"

"I dess I do."

"Then be good till she wakes up, you may play with her then."

With this the boy seemed satisfied and went away by himself. The husband and wife still stood regarding their new responsibility. A sudden little pain darted into the heart of the woman. What if the mother of Nada should some time come back to reclaim her offspring? This thought had haunted Clara Greaves, causing more than one sleepless night. David saw the serious light in his companion's eyes and asked its cause.

She told him all her fears.

"You mustn't think about that at all," he reassured her. "A mother who could throw her own flesh and blood on the world isn't the one to ever come back to claim it. I have no fears."

"I have laid awake nights thinking about it, David."

"Do so no more. Nada is ours to keep all through life, Clara."

His reassuring words comforted the fostermother.

"I love her as though she were of our flesh and blood, David," she said, with glowing face. "How could a mother be so wicked as to give up her darling to strangers? It passes my understanding entirely."

"And mine, too," assented Dave. "But, you know, there's always a chance for some doubt. The mother may not be on earth, Clara."

"Not on earth?"

"She may be dead, you know."

A startled expression filled the eyes of Mrs. Greaves.

"Not in the way you are thinking, Clara," said he quickly. "The woman who brought us little Nada is not the child's mother. That is my thought, and it grows continually."

"Oh, David!"

"There is nothing startling about that fact. I have never for a moment believed that the woman was mother of the child."

"Then, who——"

"Oh, of course, I can't answer that," he broke in. "Let it suffice that Nada is now ours to nurture and love, and that we have cause to be thankful that such a darling fell into such good hands."

"But about the mother," protested Clara, plainly disturbed by the reasoning of her husband. "If our visitor was not that person she had no right to give Nada away, and the true mother may be even now searching for her lost darling. It seems dreadful to think about."

"Don't think about it then, Clara," and Mr. Greaves laughed lightly.

"Oh, but I can't help thinking about it, David. I don't want anybody to take our Nada away; we won't let them, will me, sweet?"

The mother bent quickly above the sleeping child, clasped her tight and lifting her in a fond embrace, paced across the room, while big salty drops rolled from under her long lashes.

"Naughty woman come to take our Nada! I guess not. We won't let 'em have her, never in this world, will we, precious?" She hugged and kissed the little girl in a rapture of fond feeling that touched the heart of the man who looked on.

Down deep in his heart David Greaves held a fear that some time, somehow and somewhere, little Nada, cast upon their care in so strange a manner, was to bring them many a trouble and heartache. Not for the world would he speak such thoughts aloud, however.

The raftsman walked outside, turning as he passed the outer threshold to glance back at the slender, gliding form of his wife, with the babe of chance clasped so tightly, her red lips touching, now and then, the soft cheek of her little charge. The picture, sweet yet sorrowful, abided with the stalwart man for long years afterward.

CHAPTER III.

THROUGH DEMON RAPIDS.

A canoe, of Indian make, was gliding gracefully across the bosom of the Clearwater, bearing two occupants, a girl of fourteen and a boy four years her senior.

The passage of thirteen years has made a visible impression on the scenery round about the river. Where once stood massive pine forests, whose tasseled tops kissed the skies, now extend cleared fields of the farmer or barren wastes of unfertile soil, on which is growing scrub oak and the slender, yet no less thrifty, poplar.

Fewer redmen wake the echoes with rifle and hound. The white settler has overborne his red brother, and the ax of the lumberman has left nothing for the Indian to cherish.

Up the stream a black cloud lowered, threatening rain.

"We found the huckleberries, Gordon, won't our folks be glad? I tell you, it's just fun to go after the blue beauties. I have enough for the biggest pie."

The speaker's blue eyes drooped to the tin pail before her, which was well rounded with delicious fruit. Boy and girl had been on an exploring expedition, seeking the berry marshes up the stream where, every year the settlers' wives made rich harvest for home use, and if there were a few quarts left over, these found ready sale at the crossroads store.

"Yes, we found a few," and Gordon laughed. His eyes were not bent on the berry-pail, but centered rather on the comely face of his pretty companion. "Do you know, Nada, I wasn't thinking of berries?"

"No?"

"It has been a long time since that night, Nada. My, but do you know how you have grown?"

"Well, I should think I ought to. What night, Gordon? I don't remember any special date worth remembering. We have grown up in the woods, having some good times and a lot of adventures with snakes and alligators."

"Alligators, Nada?"

The boy's black eyes were filled with a puzzled expression.

"Why, river alligators, of course," her even white teeth showing in the merry laugh that followed. "Have you forgotten, brother, the squirmy, nasty thing that got on my hook when fishing last spring, and how frightened I was? I have never liked fish quite so well since."

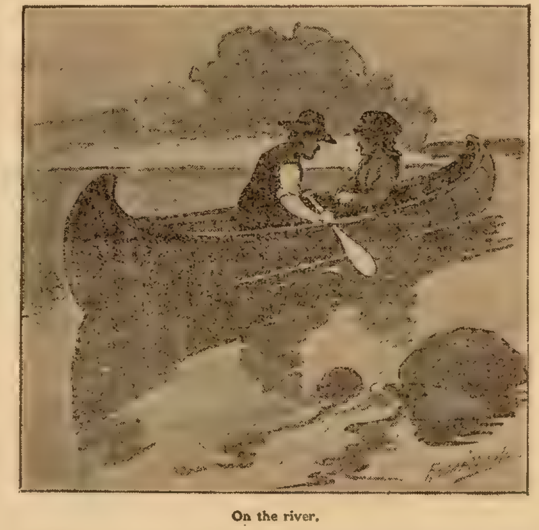
"Oh, you mean water dogs," and the boy laughed amusedly. "They are harmless creatures. Father says he used often to touch them with his hands when he was moving stone off his father's farm, the old homestead way down in Maine."

"And didn't they bite?"

"No, they are a harmless sort of lizzard."

At this moment a roll of thunder echoed over the hills.

"There's a storm coming!" exclaimed the girl with a little cringe. "We shan't have time to get home before it bursts. See that black cloud towering up over yonder trees."



On the river.

"It does look storm-like," agreed the boy, bending suddenly to his paddle. His companion assisted with a second paddle. Both were expert canoesmen and had no fear of the water, although Nada had never learned to swim as had her brother.

The day had been hot and oppressive. A sudden breeze writhed the trees and ridged the surface of the river with whitecaps. Presently a bolt of lightning splintered a pine stub on shore, distant only a few rods. Nada uttered a startled scream.

"Never mind," cried Gordon, "lightning never strikes twice in one place."

"No, but that's no sign it won't hit us," gasped the girl, her pink cheeks growing white. "I wish we were home, safe and sound."

"Sorry you came after berries, eh?"

"No, I'm not," and Nada forced a laugh. "I guess you think I'm a big coward, Gordon, but somehow, I can't get used to thunderstorms."

"Nor alligators, eh?" chuckled the boy.

The wind rose, whipping the pine tops, careering recklessly over the hills, tearing loose bits of dry limbs that came flying into the water in dangerous proximity to our young voyagers. The claps of thunder became more frequent, while now and then a drop of water fell.

Gordon scanned the heavens with eager eye. There was sure to be a terrible storm, and it would be quite impossible to reach home before it burst in all its fury. He thought of a not distant shelter and dipped his paddle more deeply than ever.

"We can reach Buckhalter's old shingle shanties if we hurry," he said. "They will afford shelter till the storm is past."

The two plied their paddles in a desperate effort to outride the storm. It was a mile down the stream to the shanties named by Gordon. Nada remembered them, having once eaten her lunch there in company with a merry party of berry pickers.

Night began to settle on the river. This added to the terrors of the situation. Gordon held on to his cheerfulness, however, and tried his best to reassure his sister. They were nearing a dangerous point in the river, where the water boiled and foamed over hidden rocks. In their eagerness to escape the storm, brother and sister had forgotten this.

A sudden dash of water across his face, accompanied by the sullen roar of the rapids, warned the boy of what was in store for them.

Gordon felt a thrill of dire apprehension. He poised his paddle an instant in air. The canoe grated on some hidden object and trembled like a living thing in pain.

"The rocks!" he ejaculated under his breath.

And then the rain began to fall. It dropped like a young Niagara. Surely, this was one of the cloudbursts such as he had read about but never before witnessed. The young people were drenched to the skin almost instantly. Nada uttered a pitiful little wail of dismay.

"Do be quiet, Nada," he said. "We'll soon be all right."

"Cold as clams at the bottom of the river, Gordy," she retorted.

The roar and wild wash of tumbled water answered. Black darkness held sudden and complete sway. Nothing was visible save only when a flash of electricity illumined the scene. The suddenness and severity of the storm was something terrifying, and to Gordon unaccountable. He had never seen anything like it in fury. He made a desperate effort to beach the canoe. This effort was made at an unfortunate moment, since the little craft turned sidewise against a projecting bit of floodwood and was instantly overturned. A scream from his companion cut Gordon to the heart.

"Here, Nada, here!" he shouted, reaching after her in the darkness.

"Help, Gordon, help!"

And then the lightning flashed. A white face, half-covered with tangled braids of yellow hair, met the boy's strained gaze; the next instant face and hair were swept beneath the floodwood. Gordon was wild. He dove beneath the debris into the mad waters in a desperate effort to save his sister. His head got a bad thump, yet he managed to pass under the jam and come out on the lower side. He had not found Nada. He called her name, splashing about in the search. The storm roared more fiercely. His cries were drowned in the general uproar of falling rain, hissing rocks and bellowing thunder. Never was there such a night. Nada must not drown! This was the one thought that possessed Gordon. Huckleberries and canoe were of secondary consideration now.

"Nada, Nada, oh, Nada, where are you?"

No answering call greeted his despairing outcry. The boy splashed his way through the boiling waters, half-drowned amidst the foam. He went on down the stream for many rods in a vain endeavor to locate his sister.

It was not to be. She was drowned, her delicate flesh bruised and cut by the jagged rocks of Demon Rapids. This thought unnerved the usually stalwart young forester. But a few minutes ago happy and laughing, with bright hopes of the future, now cold and dead beneath the waves. And the horrid alligators would tangle themselves in her yellow hair! The thought was terrible.

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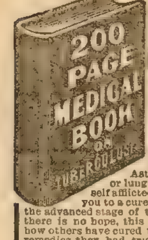

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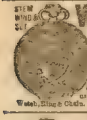

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Gordon Greaves drew himself, wet and draggled and more dead than alive, from the river, crawled a pace above the clasp of the water, and lay quite helpless against the gravelly bank.

The storm roared itself out. Summer stars came out and blinked in the sky overhead. Gordon stirred at length and groaned. He was stiff, wet and sore. There was not a bone in his strong young body that did not ache. What recked he of that, however? It was of Nada he thought. How could he ever face his parents and tell them that he had let her drown, he, the most daring swimmer in all Dug Gulch school.

The shame of it would kill him outright. He could not go home without Nada. His head ached enough to split. He got to his feet and reeled like a drunken man along the cow-path near the edge of the river. As a lad, he had threaded this in search of cows. Tonight he was not thinking clearly of anything, only of Nada, and she drowned while he still lived! The shame of it! He could never face anybody with such a tale. He must find her. She could not be dead, ah no! In some miraculous manner she had escaped and was waiting his coming below Demon Rapids. He would find her, and that quickly.

The boy plodded on. Stars touched the gleaming river as Gordon halted on a high bank. Something moved among the trees down on the flat.

"Help, Gordon, help!" It was Nada's cry, and Gordon sprang forward with a shout that he was coming to the rescue.

CHAPTER IV.

WHOLLY UNACCOUNTABLE.

Distant thunder rolled away to the north. Now and then the lightning lit up the scene.

Gordon Greaves reached the lower land and halted to listen. He saw nothing, nor heard any sound save that of the still pattering raindrops from the saturated foliage upon the fallen leaves. The stillness following so quickly upon the violence of the storm oppressed him.

"Oh, Nada, where are you?" he called, and the echo of his own voice replied from the green walls on the opposite shore.

"I am sure I heard her voice," muttered the boy. "Oh, can it be that she has drowned after all?" The thought wrenched his heart with pain.

He moved on with the rush of the rapids in his ears. He was about to call again when a faint scream welled up from a nearby copse. With bitten lip Gordon ran forward. He saw and heard a commotion in the thicket. Across an open space struggled human figures. At this moment a flash of electric flame swept the heavens.

Tightly clasped in the arms of a man, Gordon saw the dripping form of a girl. It was Nada, and in the hands of an enemy.

"Drop my sister!" yelled the boy, springing forward.

A swish of bent foliage struck the face of Gordon, confusing him for the moment, the next, he was going after the abductor with the fierce rush of a young hurricane. How it all came about the boy did not know nor stop to inquire, just then. He only knew that Nada was in the hands of some one who was not her friend, else she would never have called for help as she had done.

The boy rushed on and was close upon the fleeing forms when an arm shot out from a bush and felled him at a single blow.

"Lie there, you fool!" ejaculated a voice. A second later the man who bore Nada, was joined by a companion.

"Where is the young scamp, Jad?"

"Out yonder, silent for now."

"You did not harm——"

"Don't worry," growled the other. "I ain't into this business for blood; there ain't enough in it for me, and I'm taking no chances, you see."

"A level head for you, Jad," said the man who held the dripping and now unconscious Nada to his breast

"I calculate I know what I am about," muttered the man addressed as Jad. He hurried on in advance of his companion. In the course of a few minutes the twain halted at the water, where a large dugout was concealed in the willows which grew profusely on the shore.

Meantime, Gordon Greaves, though considerably dazed by the blow he had received, staggered to his feet and pushed on in the direction he supposed the abductors had taken. He beat about the bushes on a false trail for some time ere he reached the river. And then the sound of a lightly-dipping paddle greeted his ear.

A flash of lightning showed him the canoe and two occupants—men. Where was Nada? Gordon stood rooted to the ground, filled with a nameless dread. What if the villains had again tossed the girl into the river?

"Hello, there!" he called.

"Well, what's wanted?" was wafted back.

"I want my sister," cried Gordon.

"Hain't seen her, youngster."

"But you had her a minute ago. Have you murdered her?"

"I reckon you're loony. Go home and get to bed, young feller." A jeering laugh followed.

The boy stood very close to the water, half-kneeling, that he might better scan the surface of the river. He saw only the canoe and two occupants. Nada was not with them. Had they cast her back to the water, or were these men not of the party which had rescued the girl from death in the river. Perplexed and dissatisfied, Gordon rose to his feet and was on the point of turning from the spot when something shining greeted his eye. He bent down and picked a small breastpin from the sand.

He recognized this, even in the darkness, as belonging to Nada. And finding it here, at a point where the men had embarked, he was satisfied that they had the girl with them, doubtless held in bonds in the bottom of the large dugout.

Wet as he was, it seemed no hardship for brave Gordon to again take to the water. Being a good swimmer, he had no fears. He struck out boldly in the wake of the big canoe. He meant to trail the abductors and locate their captive.

On reaching the opposite shore Gordon found an empty canoe drawn upon the sand. He at once ran up the low bank and peered sharply about.

He saw nothing of the men, however. Chagrined and mystified, the boy stood in an attitude of intense thought. The night being warm he did not feel much discomfort from his double bath. He must find Nada let what would come. Why she had been abducted was a puzzle to him. His duty lay in rescuing the girl and punishing the evil men who had stolen her from him in such a mysterious manner.

He could not feel hard toward the men because he believed they had saved the girl from death by drowning. Whatever their motive for bearing her away, they were entitled to credit for saving her life, and for this our boy hero was thankful.

Gordon finally pushed his way forward, soon finding himself in a small clearing. He went forward to a wagon road and hastened his steps till he saw a house and a light. The boy called at the house and made inquiries. He learned nothing of the men he was trailing, however. They had not been seen to pass the farmhouse.

Gordon was doggedly determined and pushed on in his search for poor Nada and her kidnapers. He spent the night in a vain search. Soon after daylight, tired and haggard, the boy dropped into a chair in his own home and told to an alarmed mother and father the story of his night's adventure.

"We have been searching for you," said Mrs. Greaves. "We knew you were lost somewhere in the woods, but this is even worse."

"It's very strange," declared the mystified David. "I am at a loss to understand why any one should care to steal Nada. We are poor and it cannot be in hope of reward for her return."

Gordon was munching a biscuit while his parents discussed the affair.

"And to think," said the woman, "that Nada would have drowned had it not been for these strange men."

"Yes, that is the queer part of it. How happened it that they were up there by Demon Rapids just at a time when our children were floating along——"

"See here, father," suddenly spoke up Gordon, who had swallowed his last morsel of biscuit and had hitched around in his chair. "I think I have an idea about what it means."

"Well, tell us about it, son."

"Nada isn't my truly sister, you know."

"No, but then she is just as dear to us for all that," declared both parents in one breath.

"The dandiest chum a fellow ever had!" cried the boy. "I was liking her more and more every day. But what I mean to say is that there's a queerness about these men stealing Nada that's set me thinking. She isn't a Greaves, and who knows——"

"Well, Gordon?"

Mrs. Greaves bent a breathless gaze upon her stalwart young son.

"Who knows but the real parents of our Nada have come for her at last?"

"Strange way of showing affection, anyhow," muttered the father.

"Well, but what else could it be?" persisted Gordon. "We couldn't pay a reward for her return, so there must be something deeper than that."

The three discussed the strange affair in all it's bearings without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion.

Gordon went to his room and lay down for a short nap, while his father set out to search the neighborhood, hoping to find some clew to the whereabouts of Nada. Both parents were very much affected by the loss of the girl, who had grown into their lives as strongly as could one of their own flesh and blood.

David Greaves was absent till the noon hour. His face wore an unsatisfied expression as he entered his own house.

"I see you have been unsuccessful," said his wife.

"Yes, that is true."

David Greaves sat down and groaned. His mind was in deep trouble. A suspicion was growing in his mind that Nada had really drowned in the river, and that their son, from receiving a blow on the head, had become the victim of a hallucination. At any rate, no one in the neighborhood had seen aught of strangers in the vicinity, and it was likely Gordon was the one at fault.

"Where is the boy?" he suddenly asked.

"Still asleep, I guess."

The mother moved to the chamber door Her husband called her, saying:

"Never mind, Clara, don't call him. He is tired out and needs the rest. When he is fully recovered he may be able to tell a different story."

"How different, David?"

"Why, as to Nada's being carried off."

"Well, but our boy knew what he was talking about."

"I am afraid that he did not, Clara."

"What do you mean now?"

"I can't tell you exactly what I mean, Clara, but I have no faith in the story Gordon told this morning. Did you not see a glassy look in his eyes? That blow he spoke about affected his brain, I feel sure."

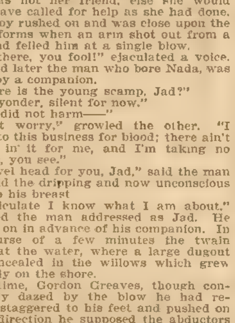
"Oh, David, if that is true, Nada is in the river!"

The woman turned a white, scared face toward her husband.

At this moment a latch clicked, the chamber door swung open and Gordon, refreshed by sleep, yet with tangled hair and bloodshot eyes, stood before them. He had heard some of the remarks of his parents and hastened to deny this latest suspicion.

"It was after I saw Nada in the arms of

(Continued on page nineteen.)



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I will send it to you absolutely free, to prove to you its splendid qualities, and then if you wish to continue further, it will cost you only a few cents a week. I do not believe there is another remedy equal to Balm of Figs and I am willing to prove my faith by sending out these fifty cent boxes free. So, my reader, irrespective of your past experience, write to me at once today and I will send you [illegible] entirely free by return mail and if you so desire, [illegible] I can refer you to some one near you who can personally testify to the great and lasting cures that have resulted from the use of Balm of Figs. But after all, the very best test of any remedy is a personal trial of it, and I know a fifty cent box of Balm of Figs will convince you of its merit. Nothing is so convincing as the actual test of the article itself. Will you give Balm of Figs this test? Write to me today, and remember I will gladly send you a fifty-cent box of Balm of Figs for the asking. Address
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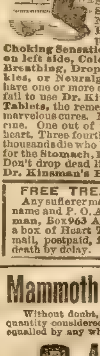
FREE TREATMENT COUPON
Any sufferer mailing this coupon, with their name and P. O. Address, to Dr. F. G. Kinsman, Box 963 Augusta, Maine, will receive a box of Heart Tablets for trial, by return mail, postpaid, free of charge. Don't risk death by delay. Write at once.



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Without doubt, this is an offer, quality and quantity considered, that has never before been equalled by any whiskey concern in the world.

4 FULL QUARTS Mellow Springs Whiskey $2.25
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We are making this unheard of offer solely for the purpose of introducing Mellow Springs Whiskey. We know that once a consumer tries our goods he will remain a permanent customer.

Mellow Springs is a pure, straight whiskey of quality, strength and exquisite flavor. It is not a cheap, fiery tasting blend, compound or mixture so much of which is sold now-a-days under the name of whiskey. We guarantee it. We give you the privilege to test it in any way you like, and if you don't say it's the finest whiskey you ever tasted, and if you don't consider this the biggest whiskey bargain you ever had, you may return what you have not used and we will promptly refund your money. Be one of our 100,000 new customers. Get the best and most for your money.

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248 S. Fourth Street, St. Louis, Mo.

Pickled Peppers

Joys of the Auto Owner.

"Hello, is this the garage?"

"Yes."

"This is Clinton. Send my machine around to the house right away, will you?"

"Sorry, Mr. Clinton, but Mr. Sprocketts, our salesman, has your machine out just now."

"How soon will he be back?"

"Oh, in about half an hour, I guess. He started for Summit two hours ago with a customer. He didn't think you would mind if he used your car for demonstration purposes."

"When he gets through using it, I'd like to take some friends of mine to the train, if you don't care."

"I'll do what I can for you, Mr. Clinton, but I may as well tell you now that one of our machinists is waiting here with a party of young women, and he expects to take them to Passaic when Mr. Sprocketts gets back."

"Haven't you another car that you can send me in place of my car?"

"No, I haven't just now; but I'll order you a carriage from the livery stable across the street, if that will do."

How Could He?

"Vicious circle" is a term used in the medical world. An example of its psychological use applied to argument may be found in Joseph A. Scoville's book, "Old Merchants of New York City."

Tom, the son of a wealthy man, was a great favorite with all who knew him, but he heartily detested business. A merchant of New York had hired him as bookkeeper at a high salary. Nevertheless, Tom got into the habit of reaching the office later and later, until finally he got there about 2 in the afternoon. When this state of affairs had gone on for a week the merchant remonstrated.

"But, my dear sir," returned Tom, "how can I come any earlier? I don't get my breakfast until 1."

"But get your breakfast earlier."

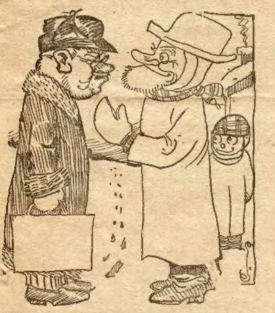
"How can I? I don't get up till 12."

"Then get up earlier."

"How can I," pleaded Tom, "when I don't go to bed until daylight?"

In the face of such convincing argument there was nothing more to be said.

Wifey Did the Work.



Salesman—Can't I sell you one of my patent clothes wringers?

Farmer—I got a good one now; can't be beat.

Salesman—What kind is it?

Farmer—My wife.

Result of Observation.

A little girl from an East End slum was invited, with others, to a charity dinner given at a great house in the West End of London.

In the course of the meal the little maiden startled her hostess and the aristocratic company by solemnly propounding the query:

"Does your husband drink?"

"Why, no," replied the astonished mistress of the house.

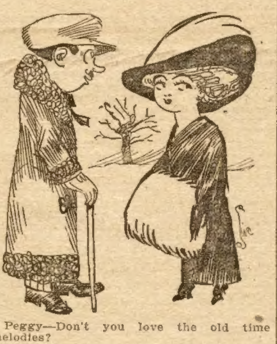
After a moment's pause the miniature querist proceeded with the equally bewildering questions:

How much coal do you burn? What is your husband's salary? Has your husband any bad habits? Does your son go to work?

By this time the presiding genius of the table felt called upon to ask her humble guest what made her put such strange questions.

"Well," was the innocent reply, "mother told me to behave like a lady, and when ladies call at our house they always ask my mother those questions."

Likes Fresh Airs.



Peggy—Don't you love the old time melodies?

Billy—No. I'm a fresh-air fiend.

A Day Off.

Mrs. Out-of-Town (to near neighbor)—Such trouble as I've had today; I'm nearly dead.

Neighbor—Mercy! What's happened?

Mrs. Out-of-Town—My husband's watch stopped last night.

Neighbor—I don't see why that——

Mrs. Out-of-Town—No; neither could we. It never stopped before, and we didn't know it was stopped this morning, because it stopped at seven o'clock last evening, and so I set the clock by it, and that was wrong, and my husband missed the train to the city, and the children were late to school.

Neighbor—Not pleasant, of course; but——

Mrs. Out-of-Town—Oh! but I haven't told you. You see, my husband, after missing his regular train, concluded to take a day off and mend all the furniture.

Neighbor—I see.

Mrs. Out-of-Town—Yes. He's got everything in the house apart and can't get them together again.

He Was a Discreet Lad.

"Arthur Smith," said the teacher, impatiently, "what is it you are fidgeting with?"

Although the lad colored up, he did not reply. The class "squealer," however, was ready, as usual, with full information.

"It's a pin he's got," he said triumphantly.

"Take it away from him and bring it here," said the instructor. The offending pin was taken to her, and there was no more trouble from Arthur. Presently it was the youngster's turn to read, but instead of reading up as the other students had done he sat still and looked frightened.

"Well, why don't you proceed with the reading?" exclaimed the teacher. "If you misbehave any more I shall make an example of you."

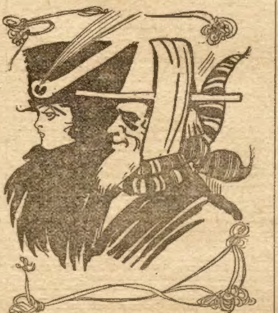
"Please, teacher," stuttered little Arthur, "I can't stand up 'cause the pin you took keeps my pa-pants up."

Fitted for the Task.

"How do you get your hair arranged so beautifully?" asked the admiring friend.

"I'll tell you," candidly answers the owner of the many switches, braids, puffs, ringlets, etc. "Every maid I had simply wore herself out with the heavy work of dressing my hair, until last summer I found a sturdy Swedish girl pitching hay on a farm near our cottage. I engaged her at once."

Cruel Uncle.



Dolly—Uncle, do you know that most women have the gift of second sight?

Uncle—Yes, they look twice at the dress of every other woman they pass on the street.

How to Get Rid of Catarrh.

A Simple, Safe, Reliable Way, and It Costs Nothing to Try.

Those who suffer from catarrh know its miseries. There is no need of this suffering. You can get rid of it by a simple, safe, inexpensive, home treatment discovered by Dr. Blosser, who, for over thirty-five years, has been treating catarrh successfully.

His treatment is unlike any other. It is not a spray, douche, salve, cream, or inhaler, but is a more direct and thorough treatment than any of these. It cleans out the head, nose, throat and lungs so that you can again breathe freely and sleep without that stopped-up feeling that all catarrh sufferers have. It heals the diseased mucous membranes and arrests the foul discharge, so that you will not be constantly blowing your nose and spitting, and at the same time it does not poison the system and ruin the stomach, as internal medicines do.

If you want to test this treatment without cost, send your address to Dr. J. W. Blosser, 27 Walton Street, Atlanta, Ga., and he will send you by return mail enough of the medicine to satisfy you that it is all he claims for it as a remedy for catarrh, catarrhal headaches, catarrhal deafness, asthma, bronchitis, colds and all catarrhal complications. He will also send you free an illustrated booklet. Write him immediately.

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2 GALLONS $2.95

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ECZEMA CAN BE CURED TO STAY, and when I say cured, I mean just what I say—C-U-R-E-D, and not merely patched up for awhile, to return worse than before. Now, I do not care what all you have used, nor how many doctors have told you that you could not be cured—all I ask is just a chance to show you that I know what I am talking about. If you will write me TO-DAY, I will send you a FREE TRIAL of my mild, soothing, guaranteed cure that will convince you more in a day than I or anyone else could in a month's time. If you are disgusted and discouraged, I dare you to give me a chance to prove my claims. By writing me to-day you will enjoy more real comfort than you had ever thought this world holds for you. Just try it, and you will see I am telling you the truth.

Dr. J. E. Cannaday, 64 Park Square, Sedalia, Mo.

References . Third National Bank, Sedalia, Mo.

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I am F. O. Lindquist, Pres. of the Canada Mills Co., and make you

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I WANT TO GIVE YOU one of my "Canada" Brand $16.00 3-piece suits FREE and don't want you to pay one cent for it. Read my great offer—it may sound too good to be true—but it is true just the same. Read my offer.

I Offer You one of my celebrated "Canada" Brand $16.00 3-piece suits free and ask not one cent for it—moreover, I do not ask you to work for it—nor be an agent—nor distribute bills—nor sign any papers—nothing of the kind—for when I say free I mean free. Free doesn't mean work or money or anything at all, it means free without money, without work, without asking a single thing of you, and I mean what I say, and the business world knows my word is good as gold.

Now Listen You may not believe my offer because you do not know me personally and do not know that my word is good as gold. You may have seen free ads before—you may have answered them and found out that in each case you had to do something to get the free article—or you had to sell something in order to get the free thing, and you may think that this offer is just like all the rest—it is not. Please don't think that I'm trying to fool you—no, I don't do business that way—Don't think there is a "string to this offer"—there is no string to this offer—I said free and I mean what I say now and always. No matter how many times you have been fooled before—

You Won't Get Fooled Here for I give you my great $16.00 "Canada" Brand perfect-fitting suit just as I say I will—there is no canvassing to do—no work to do—nothing to sell—it may sound too good to be true but it is true just the same—I have my own wonderful plan—I just want to get this suit on your back without it costing you one cent, then I'll take my chances on building up a trade in your neighborhood—I just ask one favor of those who get the free suits—When you have worn the suit at least one week will you write me a letter and answer these three questions: (1) Does the suit fit perfectly? (2) Is it worth $16.00? (3) May I use your letter as a testimonial—that's all there is to it. You don't have to write me at all unless you want to—but I know you will out of gratitude—you don't even have to promise to write me—send for the free tape measure and blank. Now, I want to ask one favor of you, because I want to get my Canada Brand Advertising Suit advertised in your locality, and before you purchase a suit of clothes this season I want you to make the purchase from me and become my customer, and I will do just exactly as I say—I will give you one of my Canada Brand $16.00 suit of clothes without asking one penny for it.

WRITE FOR YOUR FREE SUIT NOW, DO IT RIGHT AWAY—let me prove to you that I really do give away this splendid "Canada" Brand suit free. It will only cost you the price of a postal to be convinced and to find out that I am a man of my word, and do as I say—address me personally like this—

President F. O. LINDQUIST, Canada Mills Co., 552 Wool Street, GREENVILLE, MICH.

The Black Phantom;

OR, MARK ASHTON'S REVENGE

By Ella Martin

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Begun in No. 1, January 1. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BLACK PHANTOM'S STORY.

[Copyright 1910 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 1, January 1. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

IT WAS sixteen years ago," the hermit began, "and little Nellie here," touching Wenona gently, "was about a year old, and had just begun to toddle about, when like you, with a party of emigrants, I sought, with my wife and child, a home on the frontier. And like you, we unwittingly camped within a short distance of an Indian village.

"The wagons were attacked, and though we fought desperately, nearly all were killed, and the rest taken prisoners. I escaped after a hard fight, and managed to secret myself for the time being. Later, I crept back to learn, if I could, the fate of my wife and child. I was standing in the shelter of the trees where I could look into the camp of the redskins. To my horror, I saw my wife—my Lenore, bound to a stake, and the torch about to be applied to the bundle of fagots at her feet.

"I nearly shouted in my madness, which, if I had done so, would have resulted in my own capture and death. I was not ready to die yet, when my death could avail nothing. I had a work to do—my darling's fate to avenge. But death by torture seemed terrible to me, I could not look upon it and do nothing. I might have shot down the savage who applied the torch, but it would not have saved her. I reserved that pleasure till later; and let me say right here, that he has long ago gone to the happy hunting grounds, if there are any for a redskin, which I doubt. And I saw to it that he made the journey.

"But at that moment my one thought was to save Lenore from the awful fate that had overtaken her. She was facing me, but she could not know that I was there. She must have thought I had been slain. Her child was clasped to her breast, and her eyes were turned heavenward.

"I was mad for a moment, I must have been, for it was I who killed her, and not the Indians. Just as the torch was applied I fired. I meant to kill them both—my wife and child, to save them from death in the flames. It was all I could do for them; and I risked my life to do it, for I expected nothing short of capture and death at the stake—the fate I had saved them from.

"I saw Lenore's head droop forward, and knew I had not missed. I could stand the sight no longer, and turned and fled. I was like a wild man, and scarcely knew what I was doing. I was clambering up the mountain side, the yells of the savages in my ears.

"I ran on blindly, thinking only that I had saved them from an awful death, but cursing the whole race of savages because I was obliged to do it. I heard them close upon me, and felt sure that I must die, but I intended to die fighting. I had not had time to reload; and seeing a near-by thicket, I dashed behind it. As I gained its shelter I stumbled and fell. And lo! to my astonishment, I found I had fallen into the mouth of a cavern. Hoping that I could here find some place in which to hide till I could load my rifle, I sprang up and ran forward. And behold! the hole began to close up behind me.

"I was saved! I sank down in the darkness and panted for breath, relieved, in a measure, but not knowing whether I could ever get out of the place. What was to become of me? I was many miles from any settlement, alone, without food or water, and shut up within the bowels of the mountain. However, that was better than falling into the hands of the Indians. I sat there in the darkness and wept.

"Then a frenzy seized me! I sprang to my feet, and raising my right hand to Heaven, I registered an oath—that I, Mark Ashton, would never leave these mountains till the band of redskins that had perpetrated the deed was wiped off the face of the earth. One thousand Indians should bite the dust to pay for the death of my wife and child! If there were not enough in the mountain fastness, I would seek them on the plains till the number was made up.

"I was mad on the subject; and I have been a monomaniac ever since. And, but for the mercy of Heaven, in restoring my daughter to me, I should have made up the number I vowed to slay. Seven hundred have perished; I have kept tally, and felt that I was progressing slowly.

"I had moved about almost unconsciously in my frenzy, and had stepped on a platform in front of the opening to my prison. The boulder that closed the doorway began to move slowly backward. This was not what I desired at present, and I sprang to one side and released the spring beneath the platform. But I was elated to know I had accidentally found a way to release myself whenever I desired.

"But now I realized that I had, most likely, encountered a new danger. For the contrivance that closed the opening to the cave was certainly the work of man. And what class of men except outlaws, would need a stronghold like this in a place so far from civilization? Would one who had penetrated their secret resort be allowed to go free to, perhaps, betray them?

"I was between two fires. I could open the hole and go forth to certain destruction, or remain with the probability of meeting death or imprisonment. Perhaps these outlaws, if such they proved to be, would not kill me outright, but only force me to join their band. I was quite willing to do so, if they wouldn't ask me to kill anything but redskins.

"While I was pondering on this new danger, a man came down from the cave above, carrying a torch, held high above his head. Great was my surprise to find in the torchbearer an old acquaintance—in fact, a friend of other days. He eyed me closely; and setting the torch upright in a hole in the rock, he advanced and we exchanged exclamations of surprise.

" 'James Grant!' I cried, 'of all men!'

" 'Mark Ashton!'

"And then we exchanged explanations.

"I found, that like myself, he had stumbled onto the secret of this retreat. And here he had found a band of outlaws who had been obliged to flee their native town to escape the punishment of the Vigilance Committee. They had found for themselves this hiding place and made it secure. The mechanism of the doorway was contrived by one of their number, a mechanic. On that occasion the door had not been securely fastened, owing to the carelessness of one of the men; for long months of security had made them all less careful than at first. It was to this carelessness, or the hand of Providence, that I owe my life, and the scalp on my head.

" 'Do you think they will kill me?' I asked him, 'or only make me a prisoner? I have no desire to betray my knowledge of this place, and will willingly remain here under their watchful eyes, if I may only go out occasionally and kill a redskin. I have one thousand to destroy before my oath is fulfilled.' Then I told him of my vow.

" 'I wish you success,' he said. 'They certainly need thinning out some. But after all, I believe you had better go back to civilization with me. As the robbers are about to disband, and go their separate ways, they have freed me from my oath of allegiance, and I am at liberty to leave this place and go where I will. I could not harm them now, for they no longer need this place in which to hide. They have gradually transferred their booty to a safe place, and will leave the country. You can stay here, and welcome, if you still desire it.'

"Then he took me to an adjoining chamber where the black steed was stabled, and explained the use they had made of the armor and helmet and drapery. One of them could, in this disguise, pass safely through the Indian country whenever it was necessary to procure provisions.

" 'We are pretty well stocked up now,' he said, 'but will take nothing with us. We have no further need for this disguise, and have horses enough without this one. For the sake of old times, and to guarantee your safety in this country, I will leave you this horse, who has been trained for the work required of him. No steed has greater speed when speed is necessary. He belongs to me, and I will teach you how to manage him. If ever you return, and we meet again, you may do me some favor in exchange.'

" 'Heaven bless you!' I cried.

"He then led me up a rude stairway, made by niches being hewn into the rock, to a cave above, where the outlaws were congregated. A tough-looking set they were—men who were wanted in the settlements for all manner of crimes. But as this cave was too far from civilization to be of any use to them, except as a hiding place for themselves and their booty, they were about to hunt for some place where they might follow their calling.

"Jim Grant explained to them, as they all lounged around the den and smoked, but beyond a few words, and a horse laugh at my desire to remain and slaughter Indians, they took very little interest in my affairs.

" 'Kill Indians, eh? Well, ye are welcome. We've tried a little of that ourselves; but more come, just when ye think ye've got them thinned out a little. The supply won't be easily exhausted,' said one.

"Another said:

" 'Thar is lots of furs and things we are leaving behind; stacks of grub and sich, canned and pickled and barreled. We can't take it with us, so jist help yerself. When that is gone——'

" 'I am leaving him the horse and disguise,' said Jim, 'and I will see that he has supplies if he comes for them outside this accursed territory.'

"And so," continued the hermit, "I have lived here, and Jim Grant has been my friend. I have made many a trip to the

Cures Consumption

Every Man or Woman Suffering From Consumption, Bronchitis, Hacking Cough, Catarrh or Any Throat or Lung Trouble Should Read The Following Carefully:

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Everyone who has weak lungs, Catarrh of the Bronchial Tubes or Catarrh in any form, Chronic Bronchitis, Asthma, Chronic Hacking Cough, Loss of Flesh, Night Sweats, Hemorrhages, soreness or pain in the chest or under the shoulder blades, or any other deadly symptom of Consumption, should send for a trial package of Dr. Hill's New Rational Remedy. This treatment quickly checks further progress of the disease and produces new resisting power, appetite, flesh and robust health.

Prominent Michigan Men Endorse Dr. Hill.

A small army of prominent professional and business men, and men in public life highly recommend Dr. Hill as a physician, able and reliable and as a prominent citizen of Michigan. It is a brilliant list, containing letters from such men as the Mayor of Jackson, Mich., the Judge of the Probate Court, the Sheriff of Jackson County, Mich., the Judge of the Police Court, President of the Union Bank, General Secretary of the Y. M. C. A., the Prosecuting Attorney of Jackson County, the City Treasurer, five prominent physicians, ministers of the First Congregational, First Presbyterian and First Baptist Churches, and the Rector of St. Paul's Church, all at Jackson, Mich., in Dr. Hill's home town. But this is not all. A rival city, Battle Creek, Mich., adds its enthusiasm. The Superintendent of Schools, the Chief of the Fire Department, the Chief of Police, the Alderman of the Fifth Ward, including lawyers, physicians and merchants residing in Battle Creek, write ringing letters of endorsement.

Consumptive at 63 Cured by Dr. Hill.

"I think I owe it to all sufferers of lung and throat trouble and consumption to tell them some mighty good news, a sure way to cure themselves right at home with little trouble," says E. S. Stroh, of Angola, Ind.

"Coming from me, probably, some people might doubt this, but let me tell you, over two years ago I was a weazened-up wreck, a consumptive at 63. Three lung specialists passed me up. Every day I would cough up about a pint. I had chills and fever every afternoon. I could hardly eat, even the plainest food, coughed nearly all night, and was down to 137 pounds when I hit on the cure. Well, you see me now. I weigh 166 pounds, frisky as a boy at 66, can do a big day's work, and eat like a prince.

"Now, I am not trying to boost anybody, but I must give credit where credit is due. Dr. J. Lawrence Hill, Jackson, Mich., the well known lung specialist of America and probably so far the only successful one, cured me. That was two years ago. I have just had my lungs examined again and there is no trace of consumption, nor danger of its returning. Dr. Hill makes a specialty of treating throat and lung sufferers at a distance who have not the means of visiting his office personally. That's the way he cured me, and I know of many others who had one foot in the grave almost, brought back to life by what he calls his Rational Remedy. It certainly is a wonder.

"I wish every reader of your paper who has weak lungs, catarrh of the bronchial tubes or catarrh in any form, chronic bronchitis, asthma, chronic hacking cough, loss of flesh, night sweats, hemorrhages, soreness or pain in the chest or under the shoulder blades or any other deadly symptoms of consumption, to send to Dr. Hill for his trial package. This treatment checks at once further progress of the disease, develops atrophied cell tissues and brings on new resisting power, appetite, flesh and good health."

Saved From the Grave.

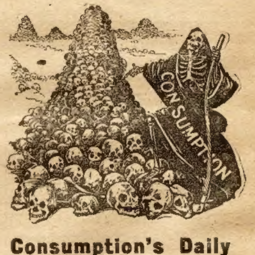
Johnsonville, Tenn.—Dear Doctor: I received a letter from you a few days ago and was glad to hear from you. It finds me feeling very well. I am getting along the finest kind. My chest does not hurt me now. I am glad I commenced taking your medicine. If I had not taken it I would have been in my grave by this time. I do not regret the money I have spent. I tell all my friends about your great treatment and tell them you saved me from death. Yours, Sarah Rogers.

Cured in Two Months.

Feb. 17, 1909.—Dr. J. Lawrence Hill, Jackson, Mich.—Dear Sir: I feel it my duty to write to you as to the condition of my health when I commenced taking your treatment for consumption. I was in a very bad shape. I had tried doctors and all the medicines that I thought would help me, but all these did me no good. Then I decided to try you. After using your treatment a few days I began to improve, and after using your treatment two months I am about well.

Thanking you for what you have done for me, and wishing you long life that you may do good to others, I remain, yours as ever, J. A. Blythe, Dadeville, Ala., R. F. D. No. 3, Box No. 32.

N. B.—You can use this if you wish or see fit at any time.



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This prescription comes from a physician who has made a special study of men and I am convinced it is the surest-acting combination for the cure of deficient manhood. and vigor failure ever put together.

I think I owe it to my fellow man to send them a copy in confidence so that any man anywhere who is weak and discouraged with repeated failures may stop drugging himself with harmful patent medicines, secure what I believe is the quickest-acting restorative, upbuilding, SPOT-TOUCHING remedy ever devised, and so cure himself at home quietly and quickly. Just drop me a line like this: Dr. A. E. Robinson, 3791 Luck Building, Detroit, Mich., and I will send you a copy of this splendid recipe in a plain ordinary envelope free of charge. A great many doctors would charge $3.00 to $5.00 for merely writing out a prescription like this—but I send it entirely free.

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nearest settlement; for the Indians were not always here, and I was absent when there was no game to hunt. And I sometimes spent months at a time with my friend in the settlement. But I always came back when I thought the redskins were again encamped here—something seemed to draw me, even when I thought of giving up my revenge. I am glad now I did not give it up, for then I would never have found my child. And the Indians always returned hoping to get my scalp at last, for they hated me because of the slaughter I had made among them.

"But the whole experience is over now," he added wearily, "and it seems like a horrible nightmare."

He ceased speaking and rested his head against the tree. Wenona reached out and stroked his head. There were many expressions of sympathy from his listeners.

"I will see you safely through your journey's end," he said, "for the reputation of the Black Phantom has spread to the several tribes which infest this country, and you will be safe from attack from any of them while I ride in your train.

"And then—after that——"

He closed his eyes wearily.

"After that I will take care of you," Wenona said, in the clearest English she had yet spoken.

"We will all take care of you!" spoke Will Allen impulsively.

The hermit beamed upon his daughter, and she in turn beamed upon Will. Then Mark Ashton thanked them both, Wenona, with a caress, and Will Allen, with a few well-chosen words.

"And we will all settle down and build houses and till the soil, and be near one another, and be happy!" Bessie said. "And we will have your friend, Jim Grant, come and live with us!"

All of which came to pass in due season.

And now just a word, reader, in conclusion, to end up the experiences of the movers, so far as their journey was concerned, and to tell those who have followed the story so far, what eventually became of them.

They were safely escorted by the Black Phantom to their destination, and in return for the favor, he received the utmost kindness and consideration from the emigrants.

This superintendence on his part left the scout without much to attend to; and the courtship between himself and Hazel King progressed rapidly. And by the time the journey was over, Hal, the Scout, had agreed to leave the plains, settle down and make a home for himself and wife. Ben Sheldon declared he would take Hal's place as scout as soon as he was old enough, which he eventually did, and conducted himself with as much bravery and judgment as Hal Wilson had done.

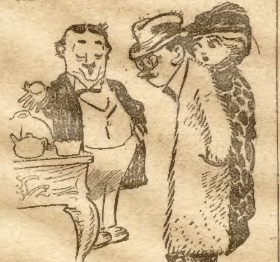
Bessie and Robert were married as soon as they could gain their parents' consent, Delia and Carl following suit, when they were old enough.

Will Allen won the Indian-bred maiden, and was as proud of his bride as any one of them. He made a home for the hermit; and there was always a welcome there for Jim Grant, who lived near. The two friends of other days enjoyed to the full their declining years, in the new country. The black steed was taken care of as long as it lived by the two friends. The disguise of the Black Phantom was kept, and many a story they told by the fireside, concerning their experience with the Indians.

And Ben Sheldon, whenever he made a trip to this new settlement, told his charges his experiences during his first trip across the plains, ending with the story of the Black Phantom.

The end.

Brick-a-Brackery.



Customer—It's too dear. There is not a piece in the set that has not been broken and mended!

Dealer—Why, sir, that's the set Napoleon dashed to the floor when he was enraged at the Battle of Waterloo!

Customer—Dear me! Are you certain of it, dealer?

Dealer—Positive—perfectly sure—briskly. But if you prefer it intact, I have the set unbroken.

The Storm Child.

(Continued from page sixteen.)

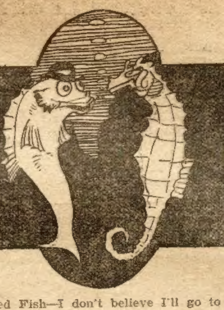
the man, that I got the blow on the head, father," declared the boy. "I was in my right mind all the time, even though a little dazed at one moment. Nada did not drown. I am sure of that."

"If that is the case we shall soon be able to find her," said Mr. Greaves in a relieved tone.

While they were yet discussing the affair of the past night, a sharp rap called Mrs. Greaves to the door.

This extremely interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very dramatic happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. Every family should take the Ledger, as humor and stories and pictures make life brighter and pleasanter for all, bringing health and entertainment and doing every one good. You will never miss the $1.00 for the subscription, while if you do not subscribe you will certainly miss the Ledger. Be wise and attend to this today.

Done For.



Fred Fish—I don't believe I'll go to the show tonight.

Sara Seahorse—I hear the starfish is a finished actor.

Fred Fish—I know he is. Mr. Whale took in the show last night.

Outside and Inside.

As the coach jogged long the wild and mountainous trail the lone traveler asked the old stage driver about a certain outlaw that had terrorized that sectin some years back.

"Oh, you mean Bad Bill," drawled the old man reminiscently. "Wall, Bill sartinly was a strenuous cuss. He held up this coach six times one winter, but outside of that he was all right."

"He must have been strenuous," commented the traveler.

"Yes, and when he got tired of holding up the coach he stole twenty horses and shot up the town just for sport, but outside of that he was all right."

"Whew! He must have been the limit."

"Pretty wild, pard, pretty wild. Then I recollect that he wrecked a medicine show, burned down a circus tent and tarred and feathered a minstrel man, but outside of that he was all right, stranger." The coach had now approached a big gray building that stood on a hill.

"What place is that?" asked the traveler.

"Why, that's the State prison. That's where Bad Bill is serving his time."

The traveler smiled sarcastically.

"Wonder you don't spring that gag about 'outside of that he's all right.'"

But the old man was equal to the emergency.

"Oh, no pard," he chuckled. "I'll change it around a bit now. Inside of that he's all right.' Get up, hosses!"

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FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

Cable Dispatches.

Here is a new game. It is called "cable dispatches."

A certain man went to Europe, leaving his family at home. He was either too indolent or too busy to write often. But he could not afford to cable lengthy dispatches, so he wrote his wife that he would condense each cablegram into a single word by using only initial letters. The first message he sent was BROWN. While he was congratulating himself upon outwitting the cable company by sending five words in one, the family at home were distracted over their varying interpretations of the message. His daughter thought it meant "Bought ring on Wednesday night," and began guessing skillfully," or the like. When as many letters have been given out as there are players, each player must read one sentence. Any one with a sentence longer than the one read aloud marks his sentence, beginning with the same letter as the one read, plus, with a sentence shorter, minus. The one with the most plus marks is the winner.

His wife in her anxiety read it, "Big rain—out—wet—neuralgia." Other guesses at the intended meaning differed quite as widely.

In playing the game any word may be used instead of "Brown." Let the leader, who is supposed to be the traveler, announce the word, keeping the meaning to himself, and let each player write his guess of the intended meaning on a slip of paper. If there are prizes the one who offers the nearest guess wins. The game may be varied by supposing that the message is sent to mother or son, or to wife, or to business partner, or from some particular city, as London, Rome or Jerusalem.

Alliteration Game.

Provide each player with pencil and paper and every two minutes give out a letter. During the two minutes each player is to write a sensible sentence, each word of which begins with the letter given out. If S is given out some one might write "Simple Susan sat sewing skillfully," or the like. When as many letters have been given out as there are players, each player must read one sentence. Any one with a sentence longer than the one read aloud marks his sentence, beginning with the same letter as the one read, plus, with a sentence shorter, minus. The one with the most plus marks is the winner.

ENVY.

Our Willie has the chicken-pox,
  But he's not very sick,
'Cause when they give him medicine
  He has the strength to kick.
His face is full of polka dots,
  And, so the doctors say,
He has to take all kinds of pills
  To make them go away.
The neighbors often send icecream,
  And sometimes jelly, too,
And books to read, and toys and games,
  And puzzles he can do.
Then once he got some flowers
  That they sent him in a box;
Oh, dear, I wish with all my heart
  I had the chicken-pox!

SUCCESS
HOW TO GET BACK YOUR HEALTH
THE MOST PRECIOUS THING YOU CAN HAVE
FREE TREATMENT
CURES
SKILL
SCIENCE
ADVICE
EXPERIENCE
HONESTY
KNOWLEDGE
INTELLIGENCE

THIS GENEROUS TREATMENT AND 36 PAGE ILLUSTRATED BOOK FREE

Dr. F. W. Jiroch, of Chicago, who is regarded by many as perhaps the best specialist of modern times in his chosen field, makes you this liberal offer.

INDICATE YOUR SYMPTOMS HERE for FREE DIAGNOSIS

Cut Out and Mail This Coupon Today

I wish to avail myself of your offer to get a proof treatment free so I can test it in my own case, I have placed a cross X mark before the ailments for which I desire treatment.

Name..............................

- If you are losing flesh.
- If you take cold easily.
- If your appetite is poor.
- If you have rheumatism.
- If you have sick headache.
- If you have pain in the back.
- If you are subject to malaria.
- If you spit up mucus or slime.
- If you are subject to biliousness.
- If you are troubled with catarrh.
- If your sleep does not refresh you.
- If you feel weak and all run down.
- If you have palpitation of the heart.
- If you have heartburn and indigestion.
- If you have weak lungs or cough much.
- If you have any rectal trouble or piles.
- If you belch up wind from the stomach.
- If your hands and feet get cold easily.
- If you spit up sour or undigested food.
- If you have foul breath and coated tongue.
- If your bowels are irregular or constipated.
- If you have specks floating before the eyes.
- If you have dizziness or swimming of the head.
- If you have itching or burning of your skin.
- If you have hot and cold flashes over the body.
- If you have boils and pimples on the face and on the neck.
- If you feel bloated, distressed or sleepy after eating.
- If you are depressed in spirits and easily discouraged.
- If you have pains in the back, through loins, hips and joints.
- If you get weak, nervous and trembling after slight exertion.
- If you have twitching of the muscles, limbs, face and eyelids.
- If you have too frequent desire to pass water, or if there is dribbling or painful urination.

Town..............................

State..............................

Street or R. F. D. or Box..............................

Have you ever written me before? ....

Give your age..............................

It is distinctly understood that I will never ask you to pay for the proof treatment, letter of advice, diagnosis, or for answering your special questions. I will also send you my Medical Book containing valuable suggestions, simple home rules, etc. all free—Absolutely Free—Write at once. Address,

Dr. F. W. Jiroch
Dept. 117
20 State Street—
Chicago Ills.

FILL OUT This Application and Send it TODAY

If You Are Sick Let Me Help You

Just mark with a cross X in the coupon below any of the different symptoms you have and send it to me, and I will send you the **Treatment Free** so you may make a personal test of just what my special medicine will do.

This Treatment Will Be Delivered By MAIL, POSTAGE PAID, Right to Your Own Door Without One Cent of Expense to You

This offer is made to any person who sincerely wants to be cured of Kidney and Bladder Ailments, Rheumatism, Stomach, Liver and Bowel Disorders, Heart Trouble, Nervous Weakness, Catarrh and all other diseases arising from impure blood, Uric Acid conditions, etc.

SEND NO MONEY Simply put a cross X mark before the symptoms that you have, cut out the coupon, sign your name in full and complete address, and I will do the rest.

The Object of This Advertisement

is to reach the sick, weak and suffering; those who have failed with other treatments, those who have given up in despair, those in remote places who are not supplied with modern, up-to-date and successful methods of curing diseases.

I Want to Prove to Those People at My Own Expense That I Have the Real Remedies

I have perhaps the most successful method yet devised for the permanent cure of diseases of which I have made a specialty. I do not ask you to accept my word for this. I am a Specialist and I do not have one remedy that cures everything; no patent medicines; no "dope." My special treatments are made up of my own private prescriptions perfected after years of successful practice. My great success is due to knowing what remedies cure and treating my patients honestly. I count my cures by the hundred where a doctor in ordinary practice counts but one.

To Prove My Claims I'll Send a Treatment Free to Test

I want you to try at my expense, **not yours.** All I want to know is what you want to be cured of. I have made it convenient for you to tell me this by simply putting a cross X mark before the symptoms you have on the attached coupon or write me a letter in your own words about anything of a private nature (man or woman) that you want me to know. I realize that I must help you and get your good will if I expect you to recommend me to others. And you must believe that my remedies are genuine, and that I do cure, otherwise I could not afford this expense of advertising.

The Vast Majority of Patients I Treat Are Those Who Have Failed With Other Treatments

You may feel discouraged on account of past failures; patent medicines may have proven worthless; your home doctor may have exhausted himself—even pronounced your case incurable—but this does not prove that I cannot help you and that I may cure you. The worst cases come to me. My treatment may be a surprise to you. Set aside your doubts; try once more. **Try at my expense.** You have nothing to lose.

Accept My Liberal Offer!

It Places You Under No Obligation Whatever to Me

I repeat—you are under no obligation to accept this free offer. No contracts; no express charges. I will pay the postage myself and deliver the treatment right to your own door without one cent of expense to you. Do not delay; do not argue. Just say to yourself "If Dr. Jiroch has so much confidence in his ability and his treatment to go to all this expense I am going to let him try." Put a cross X mark before the symptoms you have; sign your name and address to the attached coupon, cut it out and mail it to me today. It will obligate you to nothing. Just let me try to help you. Address

Dr. F. W. JIROCH, Dept. 117, 20 State St., Chicago, Ill.